JOHN DRAYTON;

BEING

A HISTORY OF THE EARLY LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

OF

A LIVERPOOL ENGINEER.

"Every man for himself, and God for us all."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1851.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

JOHN DRAYTON.

CHAPTER I.

"Fall
Upon the great world's altar stairs,
That slope through darkness up to God—
And gather dust, and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all—"

DAVID BRUCE is saying these words half aloud, and John Drayton's eye falls upon them as he bashfully takes a seat by the table. Darkly falling upon the world's

2207035

great altar stairs—he too has been doing this; but he has not lifted up his voice and called upon the Helper.

"What book is this, Joseph has been giving you, John?" said David, "you are a favoured man to have books from his library. I hardly think he would lend me one. The 'Evidences?'—that is a grave study."

And David turned over the leaves, as if the book were new to him.

"But I daresay there are few folk like you, reading nonsense verses from morning to night, Davie," said Mrs. Bruce; "you should begin to grave studies, too, at your time of life."

"Mother, are you such a pagan?" said David Bruce, with a smile. "Will you call these verses, nonsense verses?"

"Well, I like some of them, I'll no deny it," said Mrs. Bruce, "but there's some—if he kent what he means himself, I am sure it's more than you do, Davie."

"It's all pretence, John," said the son, smiling, "my mother likes nonsense verses, quite as well as I do; but she thinks there is no employment so honourable as making shirts."

"Hout, laddie," said Mrs. Bruce, as she rose and put the shirt away, "John will think you a foolish callant, as everybody else does; and now I'll leave you to your own cracks, for I'm going up the stairs."

"Are you beginning to study the 'Evidences,' John?" said David when his mother

had left them, and they were sitting face to face, alone.

"I'll tell you what I want to know, Mr. Bruce," said John hurriedly, "is the Bible true? can a man believe it and trust to it? It's not evidence I care for any more than that; but I want to know that."

"Do you not know it, John?"

A wistful, pitiful glance David threw upon the young sceptic's face. Did he not know it? had he thrown away the child's inheritance of faith?

"I cannot tell whether you will be convinced by that book," said David, "or if any book will convince you; but that you will in some way attain to the knowledge, if you really wish and seek it, I

am sure. Have you tried the evidence of the Bible itself, John ?"

" I think you don't understand me, Mr. Bruce," said John with a slight impatience : " what good is it speaking about the Bible, when it's the Bible itself I want to have evidence of."

" Is it for argument's sake you speak, John ?" said David ; " pardon me, many do so I know ; or are you really seeking what to believe ?"

" I am ; I don't care for argument," said John eagerly. " I once did, but then I was a boy. Now—now, Mr. Bruce, I see there's something wanting in this world that's not in man. I see there's something wrong ; and I'd believe anything that was likely to put it right—I'd believe anything in reason."

"In reason?" said David, "but that's an unfortunate limitation for me; for I know nothing about reason."

"What do you mean? you know nothing about reason?" John opened his eyes.

"Yes, I've heard of her," said David, with a smile, "a stout woman who lived in the eighteenth century; but she's dead, John, dead these fifty years. They made a goddess of her in yon wild demoniac time in France; but she's happily buried now."

"What do you mean?" repeated John.

"Did you ever read the fable of Love and Reason," said David—"the poor Love could not live within her shadow—that portly shadow of her's that shut out the sun-

shine; and when she covered him with her cloak, poor boy, he died."

"You don't understand me, Mr. Bruce," said John.

"I think I do, and now we'll have a talk about it; but first let us put this stout woman out of court. Is it not a pretty thing that she should go about with her twelve-inch rule, and call herself a supreme authority? but things intellectual and spiritual will not be measured by twelve inches, John. Let us have her away."

"Who is that you are going to have away, Davie?" said Mrs. Bruce, re-entering the room.

"We are to have a walk, John and I, mother," said David. "By and bye I shall come back to Tennyson; but first we have something to say to each other out of doors."

Mrs. Bruce looked a little curious—for very rarely had David anything to say which she might not hear. "Don't tell him any of your secrets, John," said the old lady, "for he tells them all to his mother."

And John in spite of himself, looked up in honest admiration at the young radiant face, whose owner had no secrets which his mother might not know.

The house of Joseph Davies stood on one of the highest elevations of the hill, facing to the river, and its southern side. Just below, there lay a terrace of houses, great in comparison with this little one; and fields wherein other small habitations were scantily sown like seed, stretched to some considerable extent around — fields which here and there, had slowly departing memories about them, of having been in

the country once, not so very many years ago.

The sun is down, and the darkness of early night begins to fall over the great extent of land and sea and sky the two young men look out on, as they stand together at the door. Down there, in that confused and smoky valley lies a wilderness of souls; the great ignoble toiling town, sending up voices, softened and seeming joyous into the night. Yonder, blue-gleaming and cold, with naked masts specking it here and there, flows the river; too far off to see its motion and life, you would think it some dead monstrous serpent, with all its hues vanishing in the lustre of chill death. Far out at sea, the blank horizon looks dead and colourless too, and only the twinkling star of the lighthouse yonder, on

the sandy promontory of that dim line of coast, looks like warm life among those monotones. Out at the river's mouth are dangerous sandbanks, and sinister white streaks begin to curl over the leaden sea; but within the river it is very peaceful, and shipmen out yonder, over the dark, truculent waves, look out and hail the light—the light held up steadily in a stronger hand than Hero's; and it speaks good cheer to them, as they fight and strain against the wind, till to every individual soul there comes from its shining the voice of the Love that bears it, calling them on—on—to the home and haven which wait to give them rest.

And as it turns, to throw out its cheering Hail, like a voice over the sea, to south and west, and north, they catch it but by

glimpses; so, now shining boldly out, now lost for a moment in the gloom, there begins to rise upon this other soul, yearning for haven and home, the quiet light of peace.

"Since ever the world was," said David Bruce, and his voice harmonized strangely with the night, speaking out of the darkness to the listener's heart, "the artist-men created on it have been labouring after one great end. The sculptors of old Greece, in yon far away time; after them the painters of the world's middle years; and the poets constantly in all ages; they have had their highest efforts always directed to one aim. Sometimes, perhaps unconsciously, constrained to follow the impulse within them, without knowing what it was; to produce a divine man — to reveal upon earth, in bodily

form and human proportions, a manifest God.

"They have all been toiling after it, John—darkly, as the Hebrew prophets did, when they were inspired with those wonderful messages to the future; in which themselves saw only a glory, mysterious and indistinct; and some of them have made very grand men—beautiful, majestic—but not one of them all is divine.

"Not the magnificent Apollo, who was worshipped once; not the Jesus, whom Raphael painted—sublime men these are, and they might be angels; but you know God is not there.

"And then there are the poets—poets to whom God has given power to create; and they, too, with human yearning, have toiled towards this end. What have they done?

There is Milton, whom you know, and who writes not only of men and angels, but of the Father and the Son. Do you remember, John? The Father and the Son in Milton's Paradise are only men—speak only as men—and never man yet has made visible, in human garments, the God."

"Well?"

The listener was trembling, too, with the emotion, which made the speaker's voice waver in the air, as if a wind blew it about.

"It is the yearning of all of us—a longing inextinguishable—not to be appeased, thank God, but by the vision. To see this man of our kindred, who is God over all, the whole world groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now!

"And once upon this soil He trod, with human feet, and was manifest; and in one book He stands revealed for ever. If it is not so, then the fisher-youth, John, and the publican, Matthew, were greater poets than ever breathed before. They were Gods who could create a God, or He was the Lord whom they saw.

"It is all as simple as if He had been continually a child; all so human—His slumberings, His hungerings, His tears; but all with such a glory about it, that, when you look, you know that this can be none else but God. Not a word could you add—not one is less than perfect to be taken away. Such a prayer — could ever man have conceived that prayer? Do you know this wonderful story, John?"

But John made no answer; he dared not say he did.

"To put them together—the Jesus whom Milton imagined, and the Jesus whom Matthew saw; or to look at Him as He stands in the Gospel by that grave at Bethany, and then to look at the picture where a great master has tried to paint Him so—I fancy these are the evidences, John. They are to me. If any other man had, in the least degree, approached the Evangelists in their success, I might have wavered; but never has mortal been able so much as to outline the garments of the Divine Man. I see Him here—perfect, unapproachable—and yet with a human nature so true and brother-like as art dared not have given. When I find this, I cannot linger to apologize and defend in detail. It may strike other minds

differently, and I feel that it is wise and right to build walls, true and strong, about our citadel; only to me these are not necessary. I see Himself upon the battlements, and I need no more proof; for the Book which reveals to me a Divine Saviour must be itself Divine."

They parted with good-nights, subdued and low, and the poet went in with his glowing heart to read of Him for whom the world's blind yearning hands have groped, and groped for ages past. Out at sea, the nearing ship felt the river's placid waters touch her keel, and close inshore passed by the sentinel light, the sailors cheer, sinking into low thanksgiving, as, close at hand, it flashed upon his bronzed and darkened face. In the haven, and with the home, peaceful and blessed, waiting yonder on the shore;

and so it travels, this other wayfaring soul, towards the great light which dawns dimly, far away, through the darkness, guarding the joyous Life-River, which makes glad the city of God.

He has laid the "Evidences" upon the table in his little chamber, where he hurries now to be alone; and beside it, see, how his fingers shake as he looses the handkerchief from his mother's Bible. He remembers how long ago he put this Bible away, and the sad Welsh melody steals into his ear again, like the odour of those violets within the long-closed pages, as he thinks how, with a great pang, the angel Faith stretched its wings, and fled away from the boy's deceived heart.

But he is no boy now: he purposes to read the "Evidences," but first to read the

Bible, and now he has opened the briefest Gospel and begins.

Darkly gathers the October night; wild about these houses on the hill the wind wails like one desolate, and far away over seas and forests wrestles in great anguish with the land and water—with struggling ships and men; but within the river, calm at its moorings, lies the anchored ship, safe in the curve of the protecting shore, and the sailors sleep in peace below her decks, and thank God that to-morrow will see them home.

The dark hours wear on to midnight, and Rachel Wyld wets her pillow with some silent tears, and lies awake thinking of her brother on the sea, and of the other, who is not her brother, drifting over the perilous waves of hopeless doubt and darkness; and she speaks their names together before God.

The one is in the anchored ship, dreaming of home—looking through the darkness and the scattered lights, when he starts to the deck for his watch, to see where home is, and rejoice over it, and bless it in his heart; while the other, with great tears, is sailing in—in to the quiet waters—in to the Almighty arm stretched over him; and, lifting up his eyes, beholds the face of the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

"GEORGE!" cried Rachel Wyld, "George! mother!"

Mrs. Wyld was upstairs, but at the name came down, winged: so swiftly did she descend the steep stairs, that her foot caught the carpet, and she would have fallen in the little lobby, but for the sailor's ready arm. "Mother!" "Oh, George, George, is it you?"

And then there follows an incoherent half hour — laughing, and crying, and asking questions—but at last they become rational and articulate; and Mrs. Wyld, after asking a dozen times without remembering the answer, understands at last that her son came in last night — that they have had a wonderful passage—and that in three weeks they must sail again.

"Your father's away, George—he's gone to America," said Mrs. Wyld, remembering with compunctions and relenting, that the father had been hitherto forgotten.

"I know, mother—the ship came in a day or two before we left Halifax, and I saw my father."

"And what did he say? and how does he look? and what was he going to do,

George?" said Mrs. Wyld, her heart softening to him, so far away.

"He had got work—I didn't see him till after I wrote the last letter," said George, "but he had got work, something about the steam-boats out there, and was to have good wages. I've got a letter from him, mother, to you; and he says you're to go out directly."

Mrs. Wyld's face grew blank, and the work fell from the hands of Rachel. "To go out directly!"

"He had worked a bit on the road out," said George. "You know he can do lots of things when he likes—and he had worked at odd things helping the carpenter, and saved some of his passage money. Here it is—two pound—he gave

it to me; and the rest of your passage I'll pay out of my own wages, mother, if you'll go."

"Oh, George, such a voyage! you couldn't bid me go."

"That's where my ship's going—to Halifax—and with emigrants," said George; "and I'd make you as comfortable as ever I could, mother. We'd all be together, you know, for the voyage, and I could get to sail constant out of Halifax."

"Oh, George, don't speak—how could you? you're sailing constant out of Liverpool now, and we're living at peace, though we've got to work hard. I wouldn't say a word against your father for the world, but you remember—sure enough, you both remember—how it used to be; and don't you see, it would be just the same again,

after a bit, however good it might be at first. Oh, George, like a good lad, don't bid me go."

"Won't you read father's letter, mother?" said George.

She took it, and again her heart melted. It was almost the first letter she had received from him since the old bright times long ago, when she thought him the man of men; and the old happy trust gradually, slowly, began to waken in her heart. He was not there, with his lordly supercilious air, to remind her of all she had suffered from him, and the tone of the letter was kind. She began to think gently of him—to raise her apron to her eyes—to say "poor George!" and he had nearly got the victory.

But all this time Rachel looked very

pale. Her hands had dropped together with the work between them, and she was eagerly watching her mother's face. Not a change on it, but you could have traced it in Rachel, as from burning red to more than her natural paleness, the colour fluctuated and changed.

"You could'nt bid us, George — you could'nt bid us," said Rachel. "Why should we go away to a strange country, where we know no one, to be dependent on him? Oh! don't you mind how you ran away yourself when you were a boy, because you could'nt bear it? And how do you think we're to bear it, with no help and no way to escape if he turns bad again? Oh! it's cruel of you, George!"

"Rachel, he's our father," said the sailor, "and he's alone."

But Rachel indignantly wiped her eyes. She had toiled for bread to him, when his selfish pride or dissipation threw him out of work, and had he been in the same circumstances she would have done it again; but her whole nature revolted against the sacrifice required from her now.

"If he were here with us I would'nt leave him," said Rachel; "but he's gone away of his own will and left us, George—left us to work hard for our living; and I'm willing to work hard—I'm willing to be a slave for my mother if it's needful; but what's the use of going away, when we're peaceable and content, and doing for ourselves, away so far from him?"

"He says he's lonely, Rachel," said Mrs. Wyld deprecatingly. "He says he's sorry for what he used to do, and he can't bear to

be alone. He'd like to look at us again, Rachel, and make us comfortable; and it's a fine country, and there's good wages. Your poor father! if I could only think he was in earnest, and would'nt go back of his word."

Again Rachel wiped her eyes; she was trembling all over with sudden anger, and a strange impulse to resistance.

"Don't I know how it will all turn out, mother?" she said. "You'll go, and he'll be kind enough for a while—at first he'll be as glad as he can be—and then bit by bit it'll come back; and then we'll fight and try to keep it secret, and we won't be able, and we'll be miserable, mother!"

Mrs. Wyld looked wistfully at the letter. "I'm sure, Rachel, if I knew what was right I wouldn't hesitate, but I can't see what to do.

It's all very true what you say, I dare say; and it's all very true what he says too; and I'm sure between you I don't know what to do."

"Mother, it's your duty," said George.

"And so it is, George," said the yielding mother, whose heart began to yearn after the exile.

"He left us of his own will," said Rachel; "*he* did'nt think of his duty—and he can work for himself, and keep himself comfortable—oh! no fear of that! If you *will* go I won't resist it, mother; but I warn you you'll repent."

"What has come over Rachel?" said George.

And suddenly it flashed upon Rachel's mind that she, too, had a selfish motive—that it would wring her own heart to go away.

A deep blush of shame covered her whole face, bitter tears came into her eye; it was not anything so very bad, or unnatural either, this feeling of her's; and it was very hard, she thought, to have it brought home to her like guilt.

So she commanded herself with a violent effort, and was calm; though never before had such a bitter sense of injury and constraint overpowered the gentle religious spirit of Rachel Wyld.

"I can work here for us both," said Rachel, "and my mother can be comfortable and quiet as she should be; but I know what's waiting us yonder—a constant fight and battle, and no such thing as content; but if you make up your mind, mother, I won't complain."

"Dear me, Rachel, what makes you speak

so ?" said Mrs. Wyld. "Mustn't you make up your mind as well as me? But I think it's duty—sure I do—and your poor father !"

Rachel resumed her work with a kind of desperate energy. She saw it was decided already.

And *she* must go away—she, with her young life just emerging into the sunshine for the first time, must go to fight and struggle again, between the tyrant, selfish man, and his shrinking, feeble wife; to immolate herself to the furies and caprices of the one, the terrors of the other. Her heart burned as she thought of all the details of the sacrifice which lay before her; and she did not see the 'duty' in it; but she resigned herself to the certain need.

"Mother, come down at four o'clock,

and see the ship," said George; "we're to get her into dock to-day. Will you come too, Rachel?"

"I'm busy; I promised this gown to be done to-night," said Rachel.

"And now, mother, give us some dinner, for I must be off to the ship," said the sailor. "Come, I should be away now."

And just then, John Drayton came in from the foundry.

There seemed some dejection about him; but the home-coming of George was a pleasant surprise, and his brow cleared. There was nothing said about the projected emigration. George and his mother seemed tacitly to avoid the subject; and the two young men, when their meal was over, left the house together.

Mrs. Wyld went bustling happily about all the afternoon, putting everything in the little kitchen into the perfection of order; the fire skilfully built up, with that more than ordinary supply of coals, that it might burn red and long; the grate shining like burnished jet; the kettle already drowsily humming by the fire; and then she went up stairs, and took out her shawl and bonnet, and, with great care, dressed herself, to do credit to her son.

"We'll be back by tea-time, Rachel, George and I," said her mother, cheerfully looking back, before she closed the door; and Rachel was left alone.

The clock was ticking, the kettle humming—the cat added a kindred slumbrous note, as she couched on the hearth, and basked in the fire-light. Warmth and re-

pose, cheerful and quiet, were in the little room; and its array of old familiar things, in that warm light, daguerrotyped themselves on the aching heart that sat among them. No painful image intruded itself into the household looks of that decent, labouring, seemly poverty; but Rachel thought of the dreary voyage, and the cold, strange country far away; and her heart died within her.

Her work progressed very irregularly that afternoon; sometimes her hands dropped in her lap, and a long fit of listless, broken musing fell upon her; and sometimes she plied her needle with such haste and force, that it broke, and she threw it away, and laid down her head, and cried. Poor Rachel! trials before she had known in plenty, but never before had been compelled to choose;

and no one knew that she stood now at the crisis of those solemn crossing roads, and that the happy might be, and the stern *must* be, were tugging at her heart.

It was six o'clock, and her mother and George had not yet come; but in a little time, John Drayton's foot was in the passage, and he entered the kitchen. She thought he looked depressed again, as he hung up his cap, and went to 'clean' himself. Could George have told him?

And now he comes in, and throws himself on a chair before the fire. Two or three times Rachel essays to speak, and cannot; and he, too, looks as if he had something to say: at length he begins:

"I don't know why it is; isn't it strange, Rachel? that some little trouble will always come in and annoy you when you've got hold

of a great joy; and then, instead of being thankful, as you ought, you fret, and think about the trouble when it isn't a pin-point to the blessing."

"I don't fret, John—I don't indeed; I—" but Rachel could not speak; the room was going dizzily round in those poor, full eyes of her's, and she thought her heart would break; that John should call this threatened banishment a *little* trouble!

"I don't mean you, Rachel," said John, glancing at her with a little wonder; "I mean myself. I don't know what trouble you've got; I'd do anything, I know, to keep you from any; but, Rachel, last night I found —I found it out."

"Found out what, John?"

"I found out that it's true—*Him*," said John, with his eyes just overbrimming, and a

faltering sound of emotion in his voice; "and, Rachel, if I lived a hundred years, I'd try every day, with God's help, to live like a man—a man that's been *redeemed.*"

She held out her hand to him, and he took it and grasped it, while the tears ran over on his cheek and on hers; then she lifted her work again, and there was a moment's pause.

"To think that with this—this to be thankful for," said John, "I should get low about just a little misfortune; but I wanted to say something to you, Rachel, and now I can't; it's that—"

"Is it because we're going away?" said Rachel, commanding her voice, painfully.

"You're going away!" He started up

on his chair, and looked at her in wonder. "What do you mean?"

This, then, was not the "little trouble;" it made poor Rachel calm.

"We're going to America; my father has sent for us, John, and my mother has made up her mind; she'll go."

"But you won't, Rachel? you won't; don't say it!" cried John. "That it should have come now! for the foundry's to be shut up, and I'll be out of work in a month; but I'll do anything; there's bread to be made in more places than foundries. Rachel, you won't go?—say you won't go!"

But Rachel only shook her head, and bent it down to hide her tears and her trembling, painful smile.

"That's what grieved me—because I wanted to speak to you, Rachel, just now,

when this came—I durst'nt before," said John; "but now, Rachel, there's work to be got at other places. I don't care what I do; only just stay and try me, whether I can't work like a man. Rachel!—what makes you turn away? don't go—say you won't go!"

"I would if I could, John," said Rachel, through her tears; "but I can't, and I mustn't. My mother—she *will* go; if anything could keep her, I'd try, but she's made up her mind—and I must take care of her, John; I must go with her, and defend her, and work for her if it was to my last day; don't speak to me; don't try to lead me from my duty. It's hard enough as it is, and you should rather help me than hinder me, John."

Poor fellow! he could not help any one

just then. He had laid his head down on the little table, and covered it, and the great Herculean frame of him was shaken with giant sobs.

"We're not made for ourselves, John," said Rachel, for there was to her a strange consolation in this grief; "we've got to think of other people—to do what's right, however hard it is; and God has done more for us than ever we'll do for any one. Don't you remember that, John?"

He did not remember it. "Every man for himself"—no, not here—not within the sacred circuit of Christian deeds and duties. Every man for God, for his own home, kin, friends, for the world; through the first stage John had past, but now he entered the second, and his first lesson was hard.

He could not yield; the impulse of resistance was still stronger in him than it had been in Rachel.

"Why shouldn't I go too?" said John suddenly lifting his head.

And Rachel's eye brightened for a moment; why shouldn't he?

"But what would they say at home? John, you've not been doing right; you've been neglecting them; and they would break their hearts, if you went away."

Poor John looked blankly into the fire, and clenched his hands. All his dreams are vanishing together; and he thinks of his mother pining about the neglected house, like the Margaret of the poet's tale, and of his father's stooping shoulders, and weak arms; for his father is growing old.

"I don't know; I think my heart will

break," said John, slowly, as he put his hand over his eyes.

"But hearts don't break that trust God, and hope, and are young," said Rachel; "and if we're spared, we've time. Maybe you'll come some time, John; maybe God will bring us back. It's all in His hand whatever way it is; and maybe—maybe, there will come a better time."

But as she speaks, the tears fall heavily upon her hands; and John Drayton's fingers press upon his brow, as if some pain were rending it; and so they must part.

CHAPTER III.

"THERE's one trunk to rope yet, George," said Mrs Wyld; "be sure you put it on careful; and the car's to be here at half-past one; we're all ready."

They are going away; and this afternoon the ship is to sail.

Look into the little bright kitchen now; it looks already damp, and disconsolate, and cold; and the bright, narrow oil-cloth is

taken up from the passage, and lies in a roll, with twine round it, ready to be carried away; and straw is lying where the trim door-mat lay; and marks of many feet are on the boarding of the lobby, for it is wet out of doors; and there has been a sale. The round table is still in the kitchen, and so are some of the chairs, for Mrs. Taylor, in the parlour, has bought them, and will not remove them till their late owner is away. But everything is gone that made the little apartment look like home; the blind is taken down from the bare window; the fire is dying in white ashes in the grate, and trunks stand about the littered floor. Mrs. Wyld has got a new cloak on, and a warm bonnet, and looks a little fluttered; there are misgivings in her face, but it wears a holiday aspect too. A hackney coach is

engaged to take them down to the Pier, and, spite of her terror about the voyage, a little excitement — not unpleasant — makes the good woman feel herself important, and a personage; and she is very anxious about the roping of the trunks.

Beside her, on one of the few chairs, Rachel sits, feeding, for the last time, her little canary. The cage stands on the round table; and Rachel, with a sadly shaking hand, holds between the wires that morsel of white bread. The cage has been newly cleaned, and there is pure water in its little fountain; for John is to take it home as Rachel's last gift, and the little bird is to be his friend.

She has on a new shawl, too, but she does not see it: hardly has seen it, indeed, since it was bought—her eyes have been so dim;

and under the shawl her heart beats dully, with great pulsations, like sobs—for poor Rachel thinks she would rather lay down her head and die there, than go away—thinks, but it is not so, for she is young, and there is hope.

And John Drayton stands by the window, sometimes suddenly turning round to look at her, and as quickly bending his head away. He is half desperate, poor fellow—and thinks he will leap on board after them, and hide himself till they are far out at sea; or will follow them in another ship, and reach the journey's end as soon as they do; or something incoherent and indistinct, procuring only that they shall not part. But always there comes over him a sudden check, reminding him of home—home where his father grows frail, and it is his turn now

to work for those who have been so fondly proud of him; and struggle as he will, he finds that he must submit—that they must part!

And all this while, George, with his jacket off, is knotting the rope tightly round that trunk, and deliberating how it will be best to tie it; and his mother, in her new cloak, gives him directions, and looks anxiously on.

Half-past one: and now the coach draws up at the door, and the trunks are lifted on, and John carries the cage into Mrs. Taylor's (she has taken a house a few doors up, and is setting up an establishment of her own) till he has seen them away; then he will come back for it, he says, but Mrs. Taylor scarcely thinks he will, when she looks at his face.

And all the neighbours are at their doors, and curious children peep into the coach, and look at Mrs. Wyld with an interest they never felt before, as, solemnly important, and with the misgiving growing stronger in her face, as the faint cold wind blows in upon her from the east, she sits in her new cloak, and looks up at the bare windows of her forsaken house. And then Rachel, who says, "Good-bye," as the children see by the motion of her white lips as she passes them—for they hear no sound—steps in; and then the little hardy sailor, George, and then poor disconsolate John; and down the steep street they go solemnly away; over the great sea, into infinity—for that is what the children think as they look after them, slowly going down the hill.

And now they have reached the pier, and

leave the coach; and vaguely wondering whether all those careless bystanders know that she is going to America, Mrs. Wyld again feels the cold breath of the east wind in her face, and trembles and speaks of it to George—and George laughs; and strangely, Rachel and John, each in their secret thoughts, record the laugh, and remember it years after as the very climax sound of pain: it jars so harshly on their strained spirits now.

And now they go down the steps, and enter the boat, and are rowed away over the cold blue weltering waters to the ship lying yonder, girded for its battle with the wind and the sea. As they draw near its high side, breasting up from the water like a tower, many heads appear to them between the decks; and the crowd comforts the faltering heart of Mrs. Wyld. An emigrant-

ship, freighted with sad hearts—broken fortunes—men foiled in the wrestle with the unseen arms of Fate; and all are going hence, far from the native mother, to brave another fall in a strange land.

But now they have to part; and John Drayton, whose parched lips cleave together, and who has no farewell to say, eagerly reaches up from the little, rocking boat, to hear Rachel's last words as she leans over the high bulwark of the ship. But the snort of that little steamer, hurrying up to carry the far voyager away, drowns the broken voice of Rachel, and he only knows that she bids him remember and hope.

"Heave yo!" and now George Wyld is at the capstan, loud in the chorus as the anchor rises by the vessel's side; and now

the little racing spirit is harnessed to her bows, and they are gone.

Speeding out along that blue, cold highway, swiftly and silent, till at length they pass the unlighted tower, down yonder at the Rock, and out of the home-river, are lost beyond, in the blank horizon line that joins the sea and sky.

He is standing on the pier looking at it—thinking he can see a flutter of sail out of the dim, ghostly clouds, or a mast striking up into their gloom till hours after they have passed out into the sea; and now when the slow night begins to gather sullenly down upon the river and its gleaming banks, and the little steamers plying on it, move about like fireflies, each with its skeleton outline, and its coloured lights, poor John desolately turns away.

There is no such thing as home in Liverpool now; and wearily he plods along, before he goes to his lodging, up the hill to the old street to get Rachel's canary, and carry it with him to his unknown, dull room.

He has other troubles, too, poor fellow! for the foundry is to close in a week.

Mr. Hardman and Mr. Power are about to dissolve partnership; for Mr. Hardman is very rich, and means to retire, it is said, and his son is going to be a gentleman. The common opinion does not add that this will be a very hard, laborious business for young Mr. Hardman, but David Bruce does, and thinks it impossible. And David Bruce, though he smiles still, is "out of work," too, and does not know where to turn for employment, for there is always

an over stock of clerks "in the market," as the mercantile people say; and there is no such thing as a poet known or employed in Liverpool, so that the sky at present in this matter of employment, is very much darker for David than it is for John.

Mr. Power, without Mr. Hardman, is not rich enough to carry on such a great establishment, and no one with sufficient capital has yet been heard of to join him; so for the last few months, bands of workmen, who could, have been going down by the steamer to Glasgow; where iron-boats, the victorious children of the Clyde, are always building; and where the Scotchmen, who most of them come from that prolific mother, expect to get work among their friends.

But all the engineers have not friends

or hopes in Glasgow, and the work is very slack in Liverpool. It is a very painful matter for these unemployed men, and John Drayton does not know what to do.

Another Saturday night he receives wages at the foundry, and yet another week's work, by special favour of Edward Cooper, the foreman, remains for John; but after that Cooper, too, will be unemployed, and every man must shift for himself.

John has not been at home for many weeks, and his heart has upbraided him often; so now, on this November Saturday, he takes his lonely way to the river. In a little bundle in his hand he carries his Sunday dress, to wear at church tomorrow, and his great-coat is on to protect

him against the cold wind to-night. How it blows!—whistling keen up among the bare cordage of the little river steamer. He shudders as he thinks how it will roar through the full sails out at sea.

It is a long road, that road to Upton—long, and dark, and solitary; and his mother is not standing at the door as she used to be, to look for him—for they have been disappointed so often, those poor old solitary people, that they cease to watch now on the Saturday nights.

But a faint light is gleaming from the window, through the plants and the little muslin curtain; and there is his father sadly failed, and with wrapt-up rheumatic arms, and a long wheezing cough, sitting in the easy chair by the fire. John sees that there is a pillow in the chair at the old man's

back, and that his hand shakes sadly, as he lays down the exhausted pipe.

And his mother stands before the fire, stirring the gruel that simmers on it, and speaking as nurses speak to invalids, soothing down the little irritations of the old man, almost as she would soothe a child. The room looks just as it used to do, except that a certain air of poverty has crept, some way, into its neatness. The sides of the grate have been filled up with bricks, to diminish its size, and it is but a very little fire on which Mrs. Drayton boils her gruel. Careworn and pinched her features look, too, John fancies, and on the little table, between the old couple, two basins are set out, with spoons and salt, to receive the gruel; this is to be their supper, and it is not very generous fare.

But Mrs. Drayton has heard the step on the gravel without, and anxiously hastens to the door. "Oh, John, John, have you come at last?" and John feels very humble as the door is closed on him, and his father rises feebly, and holds out his hand.

"Thou's been long of coming, lad; but any way, thou's welcome now."

"And you'll be cold—sit by the fire, Johnnie," said the cottage mother. "I'll put on a bit more coal, for its burned low; and there, that's the pan with the gruel—never mind it; but I wish you had sent me word, John, and I'd have had a better dinner for to-morrow."

"Never mind the dinner, mother," said John, humbly; "I don't deserve you should give me any."

"Husht, lad; we're old folks, and don't

heed about much eating—but you're young; any way, I'll run up now to the village, and get you a glass of ale."

"No, indeed. I'll take what you're going o take, mother," said John. "Never mind me; but you should have something better for yourselves."

"Well; it's little matter for old folks like us; we've lost the taste of our mouths now, John," said Mrs. Drayton: "and if we've just enough to do with, what does matter. It's different with you that's young. And then there's your father—he hasn't been working much, you know, Johnnie, for a while, and we'll have to spare betimes; and he likes a drop of gruel, poor old man; for he's weakly now, John, is your father."

And the father went off suddenly into

a prolonged asthmatic cough, demonstrating that he was "weakly" beyond doubt.

"I'll get you a cup of tea, if you'd like it, John," said Mrs. Drayton. "I've got some, real good, that Rachel brought me, in a present, when she came on Monday to say good bye. Oh, John, wasn't it foolish of them to go away? or I've got some buttermilk in the house, or I'll run up in a minute, Johnnie, and get you a glass of ale."

She had opened the door of the little triangular cupboard, of dark stained wood, which clung to the wall in the corner, and was bringing out the loaf and cheese, and butter—a very little square bit of cheese, and a morsel of butter on a small plate. Not so was her homely table wont to be supplied; and John saw that very little

household store remained on those clean shelves, which were once garnished so well.

"Give me my gruel, Jane," said the old man, feebly; "and tell us the news, John. I think I'd like to see a paper sometimes, but your mother can't abide parting with the money."

"Husht," said the house-mother again, "it's easier to make it than it is to spend it; and we'll have to spare. Your father 's an old man, John, and can't work for very long now; and I haven't been at the market for two Saturdays; we need to be careful."

Mrs. Drayton poured the gruel into the basins, and added salt; and, seating herself at the table, their homely meal began—very disconsolately John took a crust of the loaf

and a morsel from the little bit of cheese. He had seen poverty before often enough; but had never associated the idea of want with his humble, plentiful home.

"And now, mother, I'll read the chapter as I used to do," said John, with a faltering voice.

Mrs. Drayton took down, out of the top shelf in the cupboard, the carefully kept Bible, and smoothed the pillow at her husband's back, and drew her own chair opposite to him, at the other side of the fire; but, first, all the dishes and plates must be removed into the little scullery, and the table made clean and white again, lest the boards of the Bible should be spoiled; and then the house-mother seated herself, and smoothed down her check apron, and

crossed her hands in her lap, and was ready to hear.

And John read, "Blessed are ye poor;" not always blessed; but now, with tears penitent and holy in his eyes, and his humble heart new-strung for better doings, in his poverty and sorrow how much more blessed now, than that time—only a few weeks ago, when the pride of manhood seemed to him an armour invincible, and his own strength and intellect was his boast. Very sad, very dark, was the prospect just now for John; but he hoped in God, and new life was within him.

And now the old man, with the help of his wife's arm, hobbles away to bed, giving John first a brief abrupt shake of his brown withered hand, and saying, "Bless thee, lad, thou's to be a comfort

after all;" and John draws his chair to the little fire, and bends down over it, looking at the bricks that crush in the burning coals, and thinking they look like tragic emblems of the chill force of penury, as the ineffectual flame plays dully on them, and whitens, but does not destroy.

In a little time Mrs. Drayton returned, and pausing with the candle in her hand to lift John's bundle, came forward with it to the table.

"Your coat will get creased, Johnnie," said the mother. "I'll take it out, and hang it up stairs in the attic. I've been putting the bed right, if you're wearied."

"I'm not wearied, mother," said John, "I'm just troubled, that's all; and why didn't you send me word about all this?"

"I didn't want to grieve you," said Mrs. Drayton, "and we've wanted for nothing yet, Johnnie. What we'll have to do before all's done, I don't know—the Lord knows—but I'm afraid we'll be badly off, John."

"Never, mother, as long as I can do a day's work," said John, earnestly.

"Well, I always knew you'd be a good lad, and a comfort to us," said Mrs. Drayton, sighing. "Many's the time I've told the old man so, when he was low about his rheumatics and his cough; and sure enough, Johnnie, you've stayed a long time away; but Rachel says you're a good lad, and I never thought but you'd turn out a good lad, and be a comfort to us all."

"Mother," said John, "I've been a fool and a selfish wretch, and now I'm punished; don't speak about me, but tell me what ails my father, and what I can do."

"It's three weeks now since he had to give up work," said Mrs. Drayton. "It's asthma, John, besides the rheumatics, and the cough's hard upon him, for he's an old man. It's not that I've got no money for there's some in the Vicar's Provident Society, you know; but then, when I change a sovereign, it goes so quick away, you wouldn't believe; and he gets weak in his mind, poor old man, and wants good things like a child, and sometimes I haven't the heart to keep them from him. So I'm obliged to save; for what's four or five pound to keep us, maybe months and months afore he's able to work again; or, more likely, he'll never be able to work again; and it'll soon wear out—that will—so I'm obliged to count every penny, John."

And John eagerly took out his chamois-

leather purse, and produced the glittering sovereign he had brought to give his mother.

"I'll never let it out of my mind again another week so long as I live, mother," said John. "Whatever I do, or wherever I go, I'll mind home regular; and let the old man get what he likes if it should cost five shillings: for, mother, you'll see if I ever forget again."

"But you'll not be able to do without, yourself, Johnnie," said Mrs. Drayton; "and Rachel said something about the foundry; is it going to stop work?"

"Never mind: I'll get work somewhere," said John. "I'm not afraid. You take the money, mother, and just see if you can't trust me, for I've got something to work for now."

"I knew it would come true some time," said Mrs. Drayton, wiping her eyes; "for I always said you'd be a good lad, and a comfort to us all."

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day John went with his mother to church. The old man was not able to go now, so the little family apartment was put into special order, the easy-chair drawn to the fire, the little table placed before it, and the great Bible laid open upon the table.

Old John Drayton was no great scholar, but he spelt out a verse now and then, and

leaning back in his chair, let its influence fall upon his mind; hazily fall upon the unawakened torpid mind, which never had been roused by any exertion—and yet groping among its dim musings, you came upon thoughts of heaven; strange, cloudy, inarticulate thoughts, with little grace of imagination to enlighten them, yet strung upon the old man's simple unspeculative faith, as on a golden thread, rusted and dull indeed, but no less gold.

The monthly rose, on the cottage porch, has some pale flowers on it half blown.

"I gave Rachel one the day she was here, and she said she'd keep it till she came back again," said Mrs. Drayton; and John takes the rosebud she pulls for him, with a glow at his heart.

She thinks, the good mother, that it is a very grand great-coat, that great-coat of John's, and while she smooths his hat round with her hand, and he stands there in the porch, with the rose in his breast, and the November wind lifting the hair on his temples, that he himself looks "quite a gentleman;" and more than ever sure becomes Mrs. Drayton that he wil be a good lad, and a comfort to them all.

And so together they go up the village street to the old church.

The placid vicar is still there, preaching his little quiet sermon as placidly as ever; nothing knows he, the good man, of mental fevers, volcanoes, hurricanes; nothing of painful doubt and yearning after the hidden truth.

Over his own inland river nothing but soft breezes have ever curled, and he will look aghast if you tell him that here has been one long drifting over tempestuous seas, who only now has got the rudder in a Christian hand, and sees the track, leading right over a boisterous ocean still, which shall carry him home; but placidly the gentle vicar preaches, unwitting of any harder trials than those meek sorrows which himself has known; and again over John Drayton's head floats the peaceful homily—a thing of words and quiet feelings, which have grown formal in their calm repose.

When they return, they find old John quietly dozing, happy in the soft warm atmosphere, and in the ease which neither speech nor thoughts disturb; and they talk

to him, and read the verses he has spelt out before, and peacefully the Sabbath glides away.

It is dark on Monday morning — four o'clock—and John is up; for there is a boat from Woodside at six, and he must cross, and be at the work in time. Mrs. Drayton is up too, and has the fire lighted, and coffee boiling for John, and he takes his breakfast by the light of the little wasting candle more cheerfully than he supped on Saturday.

"Mind you're not to stint yourself, mother," said John, "it doesn't take much to keep me, and I'll be careful. I'll have to look out for work after this week, but maybe they'll take me on at some of the other foundries; I'll surely get work somewhere—and I can't think our foundry's shut

up for good. Some one else will open it again if Mr. Power doesn't, and then we'll be all right. So mind you don't stint yourself, mother."

"Your father is sure to be better now," said Mrs. Drayton; "anyway he's sure to be more cheerful now when you've been home; and I'll get to the market on Saturday. You'll come over on Saturday again, Johnnie?"

"Certain, mother, if I'm living," said John.

"And see you don't want things yourself to get them for us," said Mrs. Drayton, "for I won't have that. I'd be miserable, if I thought that; and don't go and work too hard. We'll do, no fear of us; special now, when we know you're thinking sometimes of the old folks at home."

"Don't, mother," said John. "I never gave over thinking—indeed I didn't; only—I havn't got anything to say for myself—not a word; but don't say that I ever gave over thinking of home."

And now, his rose, which has been in water all night, placed in his breast again, and his bundle in his hand, John Drayton shakes hands with his mother, and goes away out into the dark road with the stars shining over him; and she wipes her eyes happily, poor woman, and sits down at the fireside to console herself with the very little cup of coffee remaining in the coffee-pot. And now, carefully out of the grate, the thrifty mother lifts the unconsumed coals, and lays them on the hearth, to save them for future fires; and now the coffee-pot is put away, and the candle extinguished, and she goes to

lie down again—to lie down until the faint cold dawn begins to glimmer in the east, and the stars fade back into the clouds.

Always there is something fresh, inspiriting, hopeful, in the coming of the morning; before the dawn breaks even, the downy darkness has a softer *feel*, and never fatigues the eye like night. Yonder, far away, where the sky looks lighter, is the sea, and John pauses on the hill to look wistfully at the pale horizon streak, and the stars that hang over it like so many friendly lights. He thinks that out yonder, on the far unknown waters, steadily and brightly, those sentinel lamps will track the vessel's course over the sea; and he thinks of the steady steersman at the wheel, and the long white wake behind, and the silvery gleam upon the waves before; and smoothly she is gliding

on, with white sails swelling to the wind, and glossy waves, like the soft hands of the spirits in the mariner's rhyme, propelling her on and on. At a stately pace and swift she goes, and there, looking up from her deck, is a pale face, kindred to the stars, watching, while wave by wave, out of the silver pathway before, glides into the whitened track behind. He can hear the swaying music of the sail, the ripple of the water on the strong ship's side; and, lower and sweeter, the young heart beat, as the breath of the morning comes out of the hooded east, and the outward-bound voyager thinks of coming home —coming home! and so John turns his face towards the lights of the distant town, and goes on his way stoutly, and, like a man, to the manful labour which is his appointed lot.

"Every man for himself!"—put it aside thankfully, this instrument which has done its office. Now, every man for his dearest ones—for his home—for his fellow-man—and still the great heavens above us, and God for us all!

But the week ends, and so ends John's permanent occupation. Very disconsolate they all look, these engineers, as they get their money that last Saturday; from the foreman who has three pounds to the little labouring boys who have only three shillings a week. Mr. Power self-possessed and grave as he always is, looks depressed too, and glances over them all, impatient glances, as if his strong spirit chafed and fretted to have the will without the ability of helping them. And Mr. Shafton goes bashfully up and down, blushing, hesitating,

saying little kindly broken words to one after another of the now discharged men; and David Bruce sits pale at his desk looking up to the bright heaven far away, as if visible aid might come down from it, for the downcast family fathers who go slowly out at the gates not knowing how to win their children's bread; but no help comes out of the sky: and one by one, or in dejected groups, the engineers disperse and go home.

Very sad at heart some of them, to anxious wives and loud unwitting children. Some who have saved a few pounds to consultations about emigration, and careful laborious calculations of passage money. Some few—for there are thrifty men, not rare, among these mechanics, whose money paid in monthly or quarterly to the Building

Society, makes them landlords in a small way, and who in less righteous but more remunerative societies, as usurers and rapacious ones, add cent per cent to their capital by granting loans to the needy, who must have a supply however ruinous is its price—go home comfortably to the little high narrow brick house which is their own, and can afford to lie on their oars awhile, and wait till "something turns up." Some young men, adventurous and hopeful, to go out on long expeditions in search of work like the wandering journeymen of German trades, "going on the tramp," as they called it. Some who have no money but many children, and who know by dire experience what it is to be unemployed, to make interest for some permanent post; porter or even policeman, a considerable descent

in their social scale, but still securing bread; and a floating residuum, who have no settled plan, but will idle a week or two, and hang about other foundry-yards, and borrow from the loan society; and finally, in great straits with this debt and its extravagant charges hanging over them, stray down to the docks to pick up a day's work when they can, among the cotton porters there.

John has not any settled plan either, and all the way, as he crosses the river, and walks through the long dark country road, his head is filled with schemes. He is a good workman he knows, but married men with families have a better chance of employment than he has, though now he has a family too—and many good workmen besides himself are idle. John has not

saved anything—it is not very long indeed since his apprenticeship was over; and now he does not know what to do.

And on Monday it is no better; for to foundry after foundry poor John travels, and finding everywhere that no new men are wanted, comes home despondent and weary to his little dull room at night. It looks very blank, that small dull room, and is in a noisier and dirtier street than was the pleasant house of Mrs. Wyld; and Rachel's canary does not stir in its cage as he enters, and John, who did not hear it to-day singing at its loudest with the children out of doors, and pecking in a fever of ecstasy at the vegetable food with which he has draped its cage, thinks that it too is drooping and will die. So everything is against him he thinks, and he lies down at night anxious to sleep

and forget his cares, and yet so full of care that he cannot sleep.

The next day he buys the Mercury to look at the advertisements. Some of them are for porters, and John painfully writes a letter of application for one place, and calls on a "gentleman" to ask about another. But the "gentleman" has been already harassed by applicants, and speaks to John as "gentlemen" in new counting-houses beginning business are apt to do, as if it was a crime and high misdemeanour to be out of work; and John comes away with tingling cheeks, and a heavy heart.

And so day by day the week passes—he begins to envy the bricklayer's labourers carrying the hod up those dizzy ladders—he almost envies the poor Irishmen digging the foundations of that new church; and when

Saturday comes and through all those weary days he has never lifted his strong arm to work, John feels utterly cast down and hopeless; it seems to him a positive guilt to be thus idle.

And now it is, lounging about the busy streets, that the hundred follies which hide themselves under the name of Chartism, begin to wake and flutter in the minds of the idle workmen. They stray about the crowded docks, and there great ships are loading, and here discharging, wealthy cargoes, enough to make one man's fortune. Day by day they come and go, and goods choke up those lofty warehouses, and gold flows into hands which are already full; and from the docks, pacing up the echoing street, loaded waggons loud and cumbrous, carry great bales of snowy cotton, and iron clank-

ing in lithe lengths, past them at every step; and further on, rich silks and glittering gold and silver gleam out of plate-glass windows, and carriages draw up, and visions of rich ladies cross the pavement, and odours breathe over the dark face of the working man, and stir bitter fancies in his heart. Not one of all those silken women, with the delicate purse in the gloved hand, sweeping into those luxurious shops to throw about costly toys, and buy things they have no need of—not one of those quick merchant-men going about the street, engrossed and self-absorbed, as if there could be no possible thing to think of, except the present speculation, or profit, or brokerage, immediately before the mind of each—never one of them thinks or cares, the idle mechanic fancies, looking at them from under his bent brows, "whether my

children live or die,—grow up into struggling, toiling men, or starve as helpless boys." Not one; and he clenches his hand, and listens to the whisper in his ear, which speaks of revolution and change, and the chance of equal wealth for all.

Poor dream! But when the kitchen is so dark at home, and the wife so pale as she sits by the little fire, counting up on her fingers the items of that dreaded account accumulating at the provision dealer's shop; and when the children have to be taken from school, and the little shoes wear out, and the little appetites begin to look unnaturally great, and the poor mother measures out the bread to the hungry boy, and *grudges* him for his little sister's sake, and all idle and unhappy are together, crowding the little house; what wonder that follies should grow

of the bitterness then, and envy should clutch at any means which promises to make her equal with the rich, who seem to her so happy?

But just then the snake of revolution was scotched, and showed no signs of life; only black stagnant discontent, and want, unhappy, and thinking itself oppressed, were among the idle workmen.

It is Tuesday again, and John stands at the corner of the square where the Liverpool merchants congregate. It is a paved quadrangle, and has heavy buildings and cloisters round it; and in the centre is a mystic statue called to Nelson, surrounded by disconsolate chained figures of bronze, who weep, no one can tell you why. Within the cloisters, through doors carelessly swung open, and at great dusty windows, you see

long vistas of men and newspapers, for yonder are the Exchange reading-rooms; and out in the square they are thronging thick as bees, and as you pass you hear them talk of cotton, and commissions, and per centages; and great and small—the old man who is a *millionaire*, and the young man who pants and wrestles to become one—are bound to each other like the mystic slaves around their Nelson's monument, with stony chains of profit and interest; and the thoughts of every soul turn on a golden pivot, and to make money, there, is the chief end of man.

At the corner, where this dingy street, crowded with heavy waggons, leads past the Town-hall to the crowded dock below, John Drayton stands, looking humiliated and cast down. Other men in groups are hanging

about, some of them with short pipes in their mouths, and morsels of cotton adhering to their jackets. They speak slowly, most of them, and are exchanging experiences as to the warehousemen in "Oult's," and "Smith Brown's," and "Chapman Brothers;" how this one drinks, and is sure to get turned off some day—and how that one is a Methodist local preacher, and has just his own set whom he gives work to, and men hav'nt a fair chance. Yonder one man is telling another about his "Missis," and how she has a little shop and sells chips and potatoes, and has just bought a side of bacon—prime; while he himself, happy man, if the bacon sells well, and the little shop thrives, as it promises to do, will not need to come down wearily every morning to seek a

day's work; and his neighbour — whose "Missis" has just had a new arrival, another baby in addition to their former stock of half a dozen — sighs and envies him; for here, too, in the small compass of this group, are all the conflicting elements of the drama of life.

Disconsolately there stands John Drayton among the cotton porters, waiting till some omnipotent warehouseman cast a kind eye upon him; for John has descended a step in the social scale, and feels the descent as keenly as ever did great ruined merchant, or high-born poor gentleman. Skilled labourer —intelligent mechanic no longer, he stands among the unskilled, and has not the heart to speak to any. His back is at the wall, figuratively as well as literally, poor fellow;

and if it were not for the old people at home he would be nearly starving before he came to this—but he thinks of them, and is comforted.

CHAPTER V.

He has only one day's work that week, only one day's wages, three shillings and sixpence to receive at the end of it; and with dreary thoughts of the future, John eats his crust in his little room, and has a certain pleasure in mortifying and keeping down his strong man's appetite, as he remembers the old people at home; the poor old people, again drawing timidly

upon their little savings in the Vicar's Provident Fund.

It is impossible to keep at this, he feels—impossible on a guinea a week, even if he were constantly employed, to keep himself here, in Liverpool, and his father and mother at home—very difficult, at least—and there is no chance of being constantly employed. So John, too, resolves to go away, "on the tramp," to seek work.

"John, I hear you're a good lad, and go to chapel," said little Joseph Davies, when John went up to return him some books; "and never you fear—something will turn up; but what are you doing now?"

"I've been portering at the docks a day or two," said John, with a blush of shame.

"That's a good lad," said Joseph; "don't never be ashamed of working like an honest man, whatever it's at; and what do you make at the docks, John?"

"Only three and sixpence all last week," said John in a burst, half of pride, half of shame.

"A bad job—a bad job," said the Welshman; "but never you fear, John—only be a good lad; something will turn up."

"But it's a weary job waiting for it," said John; "it's easier to work than to wait any day, and I'm thinking of going away somewhere to look for work. I'll go southward, by Birmingham and London, and try whether I can't get a job somewhere."

"Owen Rhys, get me a bit of paper," said Joseph; "I just wanted to send a parcel to Birmingham, John Drayton, and you'll take it, and you'll be introduced to a good man there. It's dear, sending things by the railway, and this is a Welshman, and a good man, I can tell you, and if he can put you in the way of work, he will, particular as you go to chapel, and are a good lad. William David, you let John Drayton see your sums, whilst I write a bit of a letter to Elias Williams, in Birmingham."

William David has his "sums" written into a little book, but John looks over them with a somewhat vacant eye, which does not please Joseph's much-extolled scholar; so he returns proudly to drill the reluctant Morgan John into the painful mysteries of the spelling-book.

They are in the kitchen. It is a little apartment, with oil-cloth of a deep red colour, which has been washed off in several places by excessive cleanliness, covering the middle of the floor, and bright culinary utensils hanging on the wall. Mrs. Davies sits by the fireside, in a low rocking-chair, knitting a blue woollen stocking of small dimensions, and now and then giving an indignant tug to her ball of worsted, which has fallen on the floor, and is being played with by the kitten to the great delight of Morgan John, who cordially detests the spelling-book, and has proved his love of the little unhappy cat by so many violent demonstrations of affection, that the gray fur on her back is scrubby, and scanty, in consequence. Mrs. Davies does not speak English so

well as her husband, and when the thoughts come rapidly upon her, has to pause between every half dozen words, to translate the Welsh ideas into the Saxon speech; and she, too, has a little ruddy face, like a winter apple, and black merry eyes.

"Are you going to the room to see Mr. Bruce, John Trayton?" asked Mrs. Davies.

"I'd like to bid him good bye," said John, sadly.

"He's got some one—young lad with—with gritty hair," said Mrs. Davies, "with him now."

"Gritty hair?"

"My mother means sandy hair," said William David, who began to be ashamed of the Welshisms perpetrated so often in his presence.

"Ay, sure! hair like grit—it's all one," said Mrs. Davies; "they's fery goot friends: do you know him, John Trayton?"

"Is it Mr. Shafton?" said John.

"Yes, sure, his name's like that; but it's not easy keeping thought of them names," said Mrs. Davies; "all the peoples have different names in this country."

"Does Mr. Shafton often come to see Mr. Bruce?" said John.

"He was here just last Tuesday, and now he's come again; they's fery good friends—well for them," said Mrs. Davies.

"Why?"

"T'other one have got money; this one have got—what-you-may-call-them," said Mrs. Davies, tapping on her forehead with a comical little smile.

"Brains," suggested John.

"Yes, sure; but he haven't got money,

poor lad—and he's a good lad, too, and so is his mother. You, Morgan John!—I go whip you if you pull my stocking."

"Has Mr. Bruce got anything to do?" said John.

"No, indeed, poor lad! and it's hard, you may depend; but if he haven't got nothing to do, his mother have," said Mrs. Davies.

"Does Mrs. Bruce work at anything?" said John, wonderingly; for he thought he never had seen any one look so thoroughly a lady as the mother of the poor young poet-clerk.

"They isn't all for Tavid," said Mrs. Davies, solemnly; "you believe me, they isn't—I know better. They've been staying here—let me see—a year past on Owen Rhys's pirthday, and she's been working

constant all the time. Tavid haven't got more than half-a-dozen; and it's very well, that is, for a young single lad. No, don't you tell me; I know better; they isn't all for Tavid."

"I'll have the parcel got ready, John," said Joseph, looking up from his writing; "William David shall bring it down when he goes to school; and I'd best put the letter on the top—for it'll take me long writing it, there's so much news about the chapell—for fear it might get dirtied. I've told Elias Williams that if he knows of work he's to tell you; and he'll recommend you to some decent house to live in. He's a builder to his trade, is Elias; most all us Welshmen is builders; pity, John, you wasn't a builder, too! but see you be a good lad, and there's no fear."

And now John has said good bye to the good little Welsh family, and knocks with some shyness at David Bruce's door. It is opened to him, but at first he sees no one, for David thinks it is little Morgan John, on some errand from the kitchen, and John hears Mr. Shafton's voice.

"I won't come into it—it was my mother's money, Mrs. Bruce—for a year and a half, when my sister comes of age; but when I do, nobody's against me joining Mr. Power, and we're sure to make money—at least Mr. Hardman did. Now why shouldn't David take this from me? He's not made for a clerk at a foundry—anybody can see that; and didn't Southey take an annuity from somebody? and Wordsworth—I forget the name of the man—no one would ever have heard his name, but that he died and

left something to Wordsworth; and why shouldn't David take it from me?"

"Shafton," said a voice behind the door, and the door itself swayed to and fro, as if some one leaned upon it, "I believe you're the best fellow in the world."

"Not a bit," was the rapid answer; "only—you're sure to be famous some time, David. Just take this, and go to college, to oblige me. I do confess, Mrs. Bruce, I'd like to have a share, when David's a great man."

John knocked again more loudly, and now David looked out. His face was flushed considerably, and shining with hope and pleasure.

"Is it you, John? Come in."

John hesitated.

"I only want to bid you good bye. I won't come in now, Mr. Bruce," said John.

But David extended his hand, and grasping the shoulder of the great passive form before him—which all his strength could not have moved, had the giant chosen to resist—dragged him triumphantly in.

"You're a very good fellow, too, John," said David, smilingly, as he drew a chair to the table for him. "Sit down."

And John somewhat awkwardly obeyed.

"I am not a Southey, or a Wordsworth, Shafton," said David. "Such men as these might be justified in suffering other men to do for them the drudgery of common life; but not I. If I should ever be famous," and the poet's eyes glowed under their raised

lashes, and the colour rose on his cheek, like a girl's, "it will be in a lesser sort; and I must work while it comes. The birds, you know, have their nests to build, as well as their singing to accomplish; and I will never be greater in my kind, Shafton, than the mavis or the throstle at home. So, like them, I will build my nest, and sing as I build it; and my mother will make embroideries of the straw and the feathers I bring to her, and we will think it better than a cargo of gold; is it not so, mother?"

"It must be, Davie, my man," said Mrs. Bruce, as busily she hemmed at her present shirt. "But mind to let Mr. Shafton know that it's no because you think little of his offer, so generous and kind as it is, like himself; but you must do your day's darg

with your own hands, Davie; there can be no doubt about that."

"Shafton, you're the best fellow in the world," said David, smiling. "To know you is a better thing than a hundred a year. Not that a hundred a year is not very comfortable; and I won't hesitate the least to ask your help in finding some work, whereby I can make even perhaps as much as that."

"It's not fair, Bruce," said Mr. Shafton, disconsolately; "I'm quite sure, if I had been a genius, I'd have done as much for you."

"And John, what are you about, my man?" said Mrs. Bruce, as she paused, to thread her needle.

"I've been working at the docks," said John, with some hesitation; "and now I'm

thinking to go away, and look out for work in my own trade, somewhere, for I can't do so well—any way, there isn't work at the portering; and my father's very frail at home."

"And where will you go to, John?" said Mrs. Bruce.

"I'm thinking of going by Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and that way, to London, Ma'am," said John; "for work's as slack in Manchester, as it is here, they say; and such lots of the men have gone to Glasgow, that it's no use going there. And maybe, I'll go by the coast to Southampton, where the boats sail from. It's very hard being idle."

"So it is," said David; but David did not know, and only threw in the assent to keep up the conversation; for idle he never

was, thanks to the alchemy, which brought gems and fairy gold out of his dreaming.

"And, I say, John," said Mr. Shafton, "you just keep afloat for a year and a half—if we're all living then—and then you're all right. Mind, just a year and a half—and tell me if I can do anything for you now."

"I wouldn't mind so much for myself," said John; "but it's the old folks at home. The old man can't work now; but I'll do the best I can for them. There isn't anything I've got to ask, Mr. Shafton, for I'm just going off on the tramp; only if the foundry does begin, Sir, I'd be particular obliged if you'd mind me, for it's so near home."

"Don't be afraid; I'll be sure to mind

you, John," said Mr. Shafton, and John rose to take his leave.

Mr. Shafton followed him out into the street, and tried hard to put something into his hand.

"No, Sir; if you please, no," said John, half ashamed, half gratified; "I'd rather you didn't. There's lots of them, Sir, that have got wives and children, that would be glad of it; but I've no need. No, if you please, Mr. Shafton, I'd rather not. The trade gives us a penny a mile when we're on the tramp, and that does for expenses. I'll surely get work somewhere, and I've got a few shillings of my own. No, Mr. Shafton, no."

"Well, John, good bye," said Mr. Shafton; "and the first time I'm over in Cheshire, I'll go and see your mother."

It was Mr. Shafton's way. He liked society very well, and especially admired Mr. Power's drawing-room, where reigned the pretty Mary, whom he was to come into possession of, at the same time as he came into possession of his mother's fortune; but in spite of his relish for all pleasant company in his own degree, the young man was constantly wandering by a natural instinct about the houses of the poor. He did not speak about "the poor" either, nor was much connected with benevolent societies; but, by some special gift in his nature, had actual friends everywhere, in great houses, and in humble ones, and was in his own simple beneficent spirit, a link between them, better than philosophies, or theories of political equality. Mary Power had been a little puzzled at first, to understand how

familiarly acquainted he was with the intricate geography of that poor, crowded district, and to hear him quote respectfully the opinion of Mrs. Brown, the engineer's wife, and Peter Don, the boiler-maker—both great friends of his, often spoken of, and never spoken of condescendingly; but Mary, having once comprehended, was very proud of it now, and had a decided affection for Peter Don and Mrs. Brown. Moreover, Mary was greatly in danger of elevating this simple Edward Shafton into a positive hero, as he told her of his humble friends; and the good unconscious Edward, who no more knew that there was anything rare or praiseworthy in his own doings, than if he had been merely making money, could not fancy why.

Another Sabbath-day John spent at

home; and in the intervening week, made some few other shillings by "portering" at the docks—shillings which were carefully hoarded to bear his expenses until he should get work. He had carried Rachel's bird home, to be kept there till he should return, and at last early on a chill, drizzling morning, he went away.

It is still dark and very cold; and people wander about the platform of the great railway station, waiting for the hour of starting. John has his great-coat on over his white fustian dress, and his linen, and his Sunday change of raiment, are packed up in that bundle, for all his superfluous possessions are left in his chest at home, till he ascertains how he will succeed in the unknown places to which he travels. He has laid his bundle on his seat, in one of

the third-class carriages, and now stands at the door of it watching the other passengers as they select their places. Here is a young mechanic like himself carrying away a little pretty wife, whose mother cries sadly as she walks up and down in front of the carriage holding her daughter's arm tightly in her own; and the little wife cries, too, and the young husband looks on half-sympathetic, half complacent. And here is a student bound for University College, whose trunk is so heavy with books, that the two porters who try to lift it, stagger under their unexpected load. He has countless other bundles, too, this student, and disposes them about the seat in a miraculous way, and with the hand of an artist; and remarkably attentive are the porters, though he is but a third-class passenger—attention, the motive of which is

made plain even to the blunt capacity of John, as the student's practised hand glides into the ready palm of the porter, the interdicted sixpence; and now the bell rings, and the little wife is hurried in, and the last sight John sees is the mother's face streaming with tears, as she gazes after the carriages gliding away. Up into the blank echoing darkness of the tunnel, where the rumbling of the carriage wheels does not quite drown that farewell sob which, the mechanic's young wife thinks, will be hidden with her tears by the darkness—and now they have emerged on the other side.

Feverish and dissipated look the lamps burning there at Edgehill, against the cold blue dawn, which begins to break faintly in the east; and now over the dim, misty country, with lights in cottage windows

faintly shining, and smoke from cottage roofs half-awakened, rising into the chill air. John Drayton travels out into the unknown.

CHAPTER VI.

THE skies are lurid, and the land burned up by those roaring furnaces: everywhere the air seems choked by fiery dust, and flames point their forked tongues upward, blazing like some supernatural, self-existent forces, which swart, toiling demons may curb, perhaps, but which men cannot feed. You think so as you look at them, fiercely flaring in the cold daylight of the winter afternoon,

and fancy how the night-passenger, as he sees those fiery fingers moving to and fro in the darkness, might think himself, like Christian in the parable, passing by the mouth of the infernal world.

Workers in iron!—the original craft. And you can fancy something primeval in the fierce Titanic force of that wild element, as it flames forth into the oppressed and murky air, as strong and untamed as when Tubal, Cain caught it out of chaos, and harnessed it in yon ancient forge of his beside the Armenian hills.

But the sky becomes less fiery, and the eye, well-pleased, rests upon fields, and the pleasant, softened boundaries of the great town, which yonder hangs out its cloudy banner. These lingering lines of villas, each lagging behind its neighbour, forms the

transition link between the country and the town; and villages far away hang on their skirts, tending all towards the noisy loud-beating heart; and John Drayton has entered Birmingham.

It is a chill afternoon, and he is benumbed with cold; cold look those blue passengers, leaping out to thrust their hands into the grates in the waiting-rooms—very cold the unknown desert streets, into which the stranger looks through the wide doors of the station; and a drizzling rain falls dismally, and a little, spiteful, ill-conditioned breeze blows it into the faces of the wayfarers in whatever direction they turn. John lifts his bundle in his hand, and turns up the collar of his great-coat about his ears, and sallies forth sadly, thinking that there still remains daylight enough to seek out

Elias Williams, before he looks for a lodging for the night.

He has a long walk before he can find the building-yard of Elias Williams, and when he does reach it, he finds the Welshman sitting in a little brick-built office in a corner of the yard, where great stacks of timber testify how Elias has prospered in the national trade. But Elias is a shrewish-looking little man, by no means so pleasant or kindly as his friend, Joseph Davies, and tells John, peremptorily, that he does not know of any work, nor is it likely he will. "But there's good lodgings at John Jones's, down the next street at the corner, and I daresay they'll put you up, if they're not full."

The lamps are being lit in the dim street as John again issues forth, and the rain

comes down in a white blast, blinding him at the street-corners. Poor fellow! John is very "low." Since his breakfast at six o'clock he has only had the bread and cheese he brought with him—not a very great supply—and has never warmed his hands except for a moment by Elias Williams's office-fire. The rain is trickling down within the collar of his great-coat, and his Sunday-hat will be quite spoiled he fears: so he hurries on to try the hospitalities of John Jones.

It is a little humble house where they sell ale, and the sand on the kitchen floor grows into a kind of lime under the wet feet of John; but he warms himself, and has tea, and looks at the clean little bed-room which he is to sleep in, and already the sky brightens prospectively, though the rain comes down without in clouds.

But the next day, and next day, and the day after, John wanders vainly about, seeking work — back to Wolverhampton, and round about to all the engineer works he can hear of—but work there is none to be had anywhere. His shillings melt away sadly, and a horror of want comes upon him; for there are idle workmen, an abundant supply of them, in Birmingham, as well as in Liverpool, and it is useless for him to waste the days here.

So despondently John packs his bundle and proceeds to London.

To London! whither flows all the world —like all adventurers, he feels his heart rise, and thinks he will surely succeed there.

It is dark when he gets within the Great City, and those first streets he sees, do not

awe him as he anticipated they would. With his bundle in his hand, he wanders on, looking wonderingly for the splendour and magnificence which he had expected to see; but now it strikes him that to these little streets, multiplying in families, so marvellously like each other, there seems no end — that he is growing weary without seeming to have made any progress, and that already he has crossed two or three great leading thoroughfares, while yet, so far as he can see, the mass only grows darker and darker, fermenting into some unseen centre, deep within those wall-environments of humanity; and John grows dizzy as he looks, and feels that he is in London.

Next day, though he wanders about till he is foot-sore and very weary, he discovers

that it is a sadly difficult business to find out the London foundries; and now as he strays about the streets looking for them, he finds himself in the great city's heart, and under the dark dome of St. Paul's; and greatly grudging his two-pence, he goes in to see the sight.

It is very still under that great dome, and air, profoundly silent, rises up to its lofty summit, and pigmy figures here, steal like insects about the floor; but without, there is a dull, sullen roar, like the sound of waves on a stormy night, surging up on some great vessel's side, far out at sea — continuous, unbroken, gathering strength as it comes, and booming away in the distance, till you can fancy how the angry wave breaks, white foaming, upon the unseen rocks that vex it; but

strange things are spoken by those sullen rolling waters, for this is the sea of life.

And so concludes John Drayton's first day in London.

The next day he goes to the black, crowded river—which looks just like another close unwholesome street, he fancies, as he proudly compares the blue, broad Mersey to the glutinous, weltering Thames — and embarking in a little river steamboat, is carried down to a strange locality with a strange name, where he hears there are engineer-works—the Isle of Dogs.

And there, with a flush of joy, in which he forgets all his hardships and troubles, John Drayton hears that he can be employed.

The days are very cold, and the Thames lies within his black coal-heaving banks,

like a gutta percha river; black are his oozy glutinous waves, cleaving like molten india-rubber to the sides of the barges which lie moored at those crazy shabby stairs—black the leaden sky that overhangs him; and you could not fancy as he threads his way between old ruinous wharves and ship-yards, that he was anything but a blind moiling earth worm, fit tenant of that muddy course of his, or that he could ever sweep past palaces, and be called the silver Thames.

And John Drayton thinks of the bright Mersey, and laughs at his metropolitan pretentions with proud scorn; but John nevertheless is very glad to have a little room looking out upon the river, where he deposits his Sunday hat and great-coat, and once more in his blue cap and fustian jacket, goes out to his daily work.

It is very much such a community as was the engineer world in the north end of Liverpool. Some Liverpool men were among them, and the usual proportion of Scotch, and conflicting characters, and conflicting opinions, as there are everywhere; but John is a steady man, and works on, and makes friends. Proudly he goes once a fortnight to the nearest post-office to get the money order for his sovereign, and send it to his mother, and happily himself eats his own spare dinner, thinking of the comfortable fare which the old people have at home.

The work is over, and he is lounging on a Saturday night, a good way down the river, on the banks. Gay little steamers come and go past him, upon their highway, and there are bands of music in some, and

crowds of passengers. John looks at them with dreamy eyes, and thinks of the ship which long ago must have reached its destination; but the promised letter has never come to him from Rachel Wyld.

"John Drayton, will you speak a word to my wife?" said one of his fellow-workmen behind him; and turning round, John saw a good-looking, middle-aged woman by the speaker's side, with a baby in her arms. She had a cotton gown on, a warm woollen shawl, a straw bonnet above her thick muslin cap; and a sturdy little boy of three or four years old clung to her apron, while a big fellow of ten was running races with a little terrier, in advance. The work ceased early on the Saturdays, and the little family had come out altogether for a walk.

"My man tells me you've come last from Liverpool," said Mrs. Reid, rather abruptly, as John turned round.

"It's the place where I was bred and served my time," said John.

"Maybe ye may have heard tell, then, of a brother of mine," said the engineer's wife. "I've lost sight of him for long, since afore that laddie was born; but bluid's bluid, even though one of a family be a reprobate. They ca' him James Robison. Did ever ye hear tell of him?"

"I know him very well," said John.

"Isna that strange, noo? I kent ye bid to ken him. It's three or four years noo, as I was saying, since I either saw or heard tell of him, for me and his wife

didna gree that weel. I think she might have done for him better than she did; and how's he doing noo, poor man?"

"Not very well," said John, hesitating.

"No, I believe that—he's unco' easy led away, puir chield," said his sister; "and sic a guid religious weel-leeving man as he was ance in his day, and bred in as decent a house as ever lad came out o'. It should be a warning to the like of you, young men. When he was married first, he used to have the Books regular every nicht of his life, and as steady as a man could be. I aye think if his wife had made the best o't when he did gang a wee thought ajee at first, he never would have been so ill noo."

It was a satisfaction to the sceptic's sister to find this excuse for him; so John did not say how untrue it was.

"But is he keeping in regular work, puir Jamie! and is there ony word of him mending his ways?" asked Mrs. Reid.

"He had fallen out with his master, the last time I heard;" said John, who did not wish to disclose the full disgrace of his old oracle; "and I think they had gone to Glasgow, when I left to come here."

"There's Mr. Smith," said Mrs. Reid's husband. "Ay—I saw he was going to the room—there'll be a meeting, and he's a grand speaker. Wife, you can gang hame your lane. I'll no be late; but it's a treat to hear Mr. Smith."

Mr. Smith! There he is, with a roll of paper in his hand, threading his way across the muddy street to the room where he is to hold his meeting. He has a short black coat on, and a thick cable chain, which John thinks must be gold, adorns his white waistcoat, and on his ungloved hand glitters a great ring; and he switches his boots with his cane as he swaggers along, looking laboriously easy, and like a gentleman. Mr. Smith—Charlie!

Some *claqueurs*, a sort of body-guard, have gone in with him, and Reid is impatiently listening to the remonstrances of his wife.

"The last time ye gaed there, it was twelve at nicht, Robbie, before ye came hame; and what kind of a state will ye

be in for the kirk the morn's morning? Man, is your ain fireside, and the bits of bairns for company, no' a better place for ye than the like of that?"

"Ou ay, Aggie, the bairns are very weel, and so are you," said Reid; "but I tell ye, I'll no stay aboon an hour—so gang your ways hame, and never fash your head about me."

"I know him—he's a rascal," said John, with some anger. "I'll go to his meeting, too."

John was very fallible; and though his personal cause of offence at Charlie Smith had faded into forgetfulness yet his ring and his chain, and his "gentleman" air—albeit the last was very equivocal—raised a little ferment in the breast of John. *Mr.* Smith! John remembered, angrily, how

Charlie had left him in the lurch, and entered the room by no means with an affectionate feeling to the lecturer, and very unlikely to be convinced by anything he could say.

There was a reforming lecturer once—he is extant, and speaking still, the clever man—whom to hear once was to think a genius. But when you heard him again, or read the report of his next speech and discovered in it, carefully embalmed, the very points with which he had formerly delighted his audience, he gradually came down. By and bye you became accustomed to his periods, and knew when and in what succession they came; and as your knowledge enlarged, the speaker dwindled. Once you thought him a great new-discovered star—then he faded into the

milky way—and now far out of sight, you lose him altogether, and discover that it was no celestial light after all, but only a blazing tar-barrel on the fictitious elevation of some earthen mound, which deluded you with its momentary flame.

To get one clever speech repeated was very bad—to get speeches repeated by Charlie Smith, which from Wyld's vehement lips sounded very grand to the young audience who surrounded him, was worse and sadder still.

Why should one set of men be rich, and another poor? why? when all men were born equal; but by and bye the lecturer began to stammer, and paused to take a long draught of the water which stood before him on the table. There he stands, at his green table, repeating Wyld's words, a sham gentleman; while, here sits John

Drayton, a true man, looking him full in the face, with glowing indignant eyes.

In a very short time, the lecture is over; and "Mr. Smith is indisposed," the chairman says, as the meeting votes him thanks.

Mr. Smith *is* indisposed—very decidedly indisposed—to meet John Drayton; but John has no idea of letting him go.

"You've come on since the last time I saw you, Charlie," said John revengefully.

"Ah, John, my good fellow, is that you," said Mr. Smith languidly, playing with his chain.

"Yes, it's me," responded John. "You'll make a better job of this, I daresay, Charlie, than you made of the moulding at the foundry?"

"*You* don't seem to have made a

very good thing of it," said the angry lecturer.

"I'm making honest wages, and helping them that need help," said John, "Charlie, what's become of your mother?"

"Stand back, Sir; what have you to do with my family affairs," said the indignant Mr. Smith.

"She's working very hard, Charlie; I know she is, down yonder in the old place, since ever your father died—harder than you ever worked. Why don't you help her, now when you're a gentleman?"

"My good lad, you don't know how many claims gentlemen have upon them," said Charlie complacently.

"You hav'nt got another mother, have you? I suppose gentlemen are just like common men, there;" said John, "and

there's Wyld, Charlie; you ought to send Wyld something for borrowing his speech."

Furiously the gentleman looked on the clown; but John was not withered. "I'll get a policeman, you low rascal," muttered Charlie.

"I'm a working man," said John, boldly springing upon the platform, at the foot of which this dialogue had taken place; "and a year or two since so was he; but he says I'm a low fellow, because I bid him help his mother. Is that equality?

"And he says one man's as good as another all the world over, and that there's no class anywhere like the working men; but for all that, look at him, how he's taking hold of other people's skirts to pull himself up into another class, and to

call himself a gentleman—is that like as if he thought all men equal?

"Once he got me into a scrape—for we served our time in the same foundry—and left me when he knew me innocent, maybe to lie in jail long enough, for what was his fault and not mine. A gentleman got me out—a real gentleman—one of the masters he wants to put you against; but Charlie—this fellow—was content to let me suffer instead of himself, that deserved it—was that like a brother, or a true man?

"And I'll tell you what it is, you men there—you're letting yourselves be gulled and made fools of. If he thinks in his heart a working man's as good as any other man, why doesn't he go and make his bread honestly, with his own hands, instead of living upon you? I know he hasn't got

anything of his own, and I know he's ashamed to have it told that he was bred a working engineer; but some of you pay him to go and make speeches, and he's content to take pay from you, and try to be a gentleman on the money you've earned. I tell you he doesn't believe in such a thing as equality—and no more do you!"

But here uprose a fearful clamour, and cries of "Put him down!" and "Turn him out!" rang through the hall; but the slow Saxon blood was warmed to the boiling-point in the veins of John Drayton. He grasped stoutly the back of one of the platform-chairs, and made his voice echo clear over all.

"I tell you, you don't, any more than him! I was out of work before I came here, for our foundry was closed, and I've

got a father and mother at home, old people, and couldn't afford to be idle. So I went to work among the cotton porters; and do you think I didn't feel humbled! I'll tell you just this; when I was standing, waiting for some warehouseman to give me work, I used to slouch my cap over my face, for fear of any one seeing me, that I knew; because I didn't think all men were equal, and because I'd rather be known for an engineer than a cotton porter any day; and it's the same all over the world."

John's last words were lost in a cheer—a cheer diversified and enlivened by one intense hiss from a porter near him.

"I'd like to speak like a gentleman, and think like a gentleman, and read the books gentlemen read," said John, "and a man may do that if he likes to try; but I've been

bred up a working man, and I'm content to work, and to stand upright for all that, and be a man wherever I am. People's not going to judge us for what we wear, or for what we work at; neither does God say we're all to be rich and idle, and what *you* call gentlemen; but He does say we're to be *men*, living pure before Him as He tells us how. And when He came—the Saviour—He did'nt come like a king, as He might have done, if it had pleased Him, and only not been good enough; but He came like a poor man—maybe a labouring man—and He came among the poor; and who'll dare to say, after that, that to be poor, or to work for his bread every day, is any shame to a man that calls himself a Christian?"

Touched with softening feelings, John descended from the platform hurriedly, for-

getting the anger in which he had risen to it, and feeling ashamed of the revenge which he had wished to execute upon Charlie Smith; but Charlie had slunk out of sight. After that, there were some resolutions proposed, but they were received very coldly; John had spoken as only one of themselves could speak, and the natural feelings of his fellow-workmen agreed with all he said; so by and bye, very unsatisfactorily to its managers, the meeting dispersed.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN reached home considerably excited, and rather inclined to think that he had made a foolish appearance at the meeting. The fear of having made one'sself ridiculous is a very painful feeling, and John secretly blushed when he sat down in his little room by himself and recalled his speech.

It is dark in the little room, and he lets his excitement and shame subside a little

before he gets his candle lighted. His landlord is, like himself, an engineer, and John boards with the family; but there are a good many children, and it is somewhat noisy in the kitchen, so, unless the evenings are very cold, John prefers sitting in his own bedroom, where he reads, and puzzles over his algebra, and draws steam-engines, and does a little sometimes at his French Grammar—all the old Mechanics' Institution studies, which he must keep up thus, for there is no Mechanics' Institution within his reach now.

This evening is mild and spring-like, and still little steamers glimmer past upon the dim river, and pleasant sounds of passing voices ascend to him at his solitary window, and his thoughts wander far away across the sea.

"Have you got your letter, John?" asked Mrs. Atkins, his landlady, opening the door and looking in, with a light in her hand.

"What letter?" John asked.

"It's there. I put it on the table to be out of the children's way. It came to-night when you were out."

John has his candle lighted in a moment, and eagerly looks at it. Outside it is directed in the straggling hand of the Upton schoolmaster, who writes his mother's letters; but there is an enclosure inside. "Ship letter, America," and John in another instant has forgotten all about the meeting in an excitement of quite a different kind.

Rachel writes very gravely, in a subdued tone, which shows that she does not anticipate much happiness in her new country, but she says nothing in blame of her father.

The letter is very short, and when he has finished it, John begins again, feeling as if he had missed something, and a good deal disappointed. He had thought of so many things which she would say: had written her letter for her, indeed, in imagination, so often, and filled it with words kindly, and like herself, as John thought; but not one of all these did Rachel, writing in her own proper person, say.

Yet it was very kind—kind and grave, like the letter of a young recluse, to whom there remained little but patience in this lower world; but patience was by no means a virtue to which John attached the highest value, and with his strong, restless man's heart, and his consciousness of a certain ability and free volition to make his own fate, this resigned sad tone came over him

like a chill. He did not think of Rachel, entering alone upon that long, hopeless wrestle with a selfish, unteachable, uncontrollable spirit. He thought of himself, and of the bright future which seemed within his own power; he knew what it was to *do*, but he did not know what it was to *endure*.

So he put the letter into his pocket, after he had read it over three or four times, and felt greatly disappointed. He had received few letters, and so John did not know how often it happens that they disappoint the yearning fancy. How the imagination of the receiver is almost always more eloquent, graceful, and tender, in dreams of what it should be, than the pen of the writer from whom it comes as it is—that always there is something lacking in the

warmth or the tone—that some expression jars upon the sensitive self to whom it comes—and that, indeed, only "fancy itself is high fantastical," was not yet known to John.

On Monday morning he got up innocently, breakfasted, went to the foundry, and found himself a famous man.

And never man grew famous to his greater astonishment; he did not at all understand it; but the feeling was not in any way disagreeable. To be quoted and referred to, and treated as an authority, was quite the reverse of an unpleasant position, and after John had laughed a good deal, secretly in his own room, at the notion of people seeing anything in *him*, he came to take the honour and glory very coolly, and, we confess, to

like it; for John was a very fallible, imperfect man.

And Rachel's letter—one becomes accustomed to unsatisfactory letters, as to any accomplished and unchangeable *thing* which speculations and mightbe's can reach no longer. So John read himself into content with the letter of Rachel, and sent a very long, very eloquent one back in return, with which she was not disappointed. He began to grow a little complacent too, and in his elevation as an authority to say good things when he could, and make *bon mots* greatly to the admiration of his constituency, but not very much to the good health of himself, John — it was rather a dangerous position for a young man conscious of some powers; the temptation was so strong to leave the

steady doing for the easier speaking which gained so much more applause.

The winter passed, and the spring, and John was still working by the weltering Thames. He had been very careful, and lived very sparely since he came to London, but his own maintenance and the fortnightly sovereign which he sent home, swallowed up all his wages—it was impossible he could save; and now ominous whispers begin to circulate among the engineers, and week by week some men are dropped. The work is getting slack again, and by and bye, it is said, the master will have to part with all but a band of steady men who have remained with him for years. Very soon John Drayton, a comparative new comer, must be paid off among the rest; and where is he to go?

The fall is very great and sudden, but it recalls John to himself—and now again he is at his wit's end, and reflects and ponders gravely on his future. What is he to do? And at last he makes up his mind, that he can do nothing better than return, and try Liverpool again, though Mr. Shafton's stipulated time is still far off, and the men say that trade is slack in Liverpool still.

It is a May day, when John again with his bundle in his hand enters the steamer on the Mersey to cross the ferry. Right over there, between him and the pretty tower of Seacombe Church, how the sails glide like courtly passengers coming and going on a royal road. No jostling here; for look how that little schooner flashes out like a greyhound slipped from the leash, her triumphant sails wet with the dashing spray,

and something of wild glee in her bounding motion, as she passes the great stately barque yonder, like an arrow; and there a leash of dull barges are scornfully dragged along by a little saucy steamer, and here the great red sail of that fishing sloop comes like a fan, between you and the sun. Hark, guns! booming down yonder at the Rock; and there, as the white smoke blows away, comes the American mail, modestly conscious of having made the swiftest passage on record. People stand wondering and full of admiration on the piers speaking of her; but quietly up the river comes she herself, in all the self-possession of genius. *They* have only discovered now what she can do; *she* knew it all, thrilling through every timber of her, the first day she left the Clyde.

And John looks at her wistfully, with wonder and reverence; and suddenly it occurs to him, alive as all his faculties are to that momentous question—what to do—that engineers, and second and third engineers, are in that gifted ship, and the blood comes to his face in a sudden glow, for she sails to Halifax!

All the way home the idea possesses him; in every respect it seems as bright as a Utopian dream. Good wages, regular short voyages, home at the one port, and Rachel at the other—it dazzles the eyes of John.

Very frail now is the old John Drayton; but his wife, cheerful and anxious, waits at the door for the coming of the stranger, and blesses him, as he bounds in to her through the garden, as the best son in the world.

"For I always knew," said Mrs. Drayton,

lifting her unfailing check apron to her eyes, "that you'd be a good lad, Johnnie, and a comfort to us all."

"Come in by the fire, lad, and tell us about London," said the old man; and John, like a good son, obeyed.

There are two pillows in the old easy chair now, and a footstool before it for his slipshod feet; and he is wrapped in a sort of gown for those poor rheumatic arms of his, and his cough is longer and more painful than it used to be.

"I have to take my cough mixture regular every night, John," said the old man with some importance, like a child, "and the doctor comes in once a week to see me—special to see me; but it's very bad, the cough is—very bad—and now I'll take the mixture, Jane."

"He'll never get better, Johnnie," said Mrs. Drayton, when she had assisted him to bed, and returned to her seat by the fireside, and *tête-à-tête* with her son, "poor old man, he'll never get well; but he only has to be well looked to, and get what he likes, to last may-be years in this way, the doctor says: so we'll have to be good to him, John. The garden's going to turn out particular well this year, and I've got some of your money laid bye, we've not needed it all; so mind you don't stint yourself, nor be troubled about us, for we'll do."

"I've got a notion, mother," said John.

And Mrs. Drayton looked anxiously in his face to see what it was.

"They've got engineers in the American steamers," said John.

"Oh, Johnnie!" exclaimed his mother.

"It's good wages—and I would'nt be so long away as I've been at London, and they're capital boats, as safe as land—if I could only get in, mother!"

"But to go so far away—over the sea,—oh, Johnnie, my lad!" exclaimed Mrs. Drayton.

"There's never been any accidents; they're capital boats," said John; "and what more danger is there on the sea than on the land? A man might be killed at home—there's many a man been killed in the foundry."

"Oh, Johnnie, don't you go and break my heart," sobbed his mother.

"But it's quite safe; for both ashore and at sea there's one Hand to take care of us," said John gravely. "You would'nt object, would you, mother, if I could get in?"

But she did object, timid in her great tenderness; and a great deal had to be said

before a reluctant consent could be extorted from her: but he succeeded at last.

It is again the Monday evening, and John climbs the hill at Everton, where Mrs. Wyld lived. At the door of that old, pleasant house of hers, children are romping merrily, and it is all changed; but John pauses again to lean over the little green-painted railing, and look to the west, where the sun is going down into the sea.

Everything is changed but that; far away, beyond this veil of brightness, Rachel sits labouring wearily, with a downcast heart, which sometimes scarcely can be patient, in the new western world; here, strangers are in the house where once her happier labours were; and greatest change of all, himself, leaning there as he leaned only eight brief months ago; how changed is he? For the sun is

rising, full and broad in the soul of John, strangely revealing that undiscovered country to the possessor of it, and piercing into corner after corner, of whose existence he never knew. Hopeful is the morning, manlike and Christian-like, and the light will soon be near its noon.

"But you didn't get work in Birmingham, John?" said Joseph Davies, who was out in the little grass plot before his door, sowing some seeds of annuals in the border when John came up. "Never mind; you've been a good lad, and you've not been deserted. Didn't I tell you, long ago, what a deal better it was to go to chapell, and mind your duty regular, than just to follow your own pleasure, Sunday and Saturday, like a pagan?"

"Yes, you did," said John, "and it was

very good and right of you; but now is Mr. Bruce in, for I want to speak to him."

"He's a good lad," said Joseph; "he's got a situation in Mr. Gardiner's office, and sixty pounds a year. You go in, and knock at the parlour door; he'll be glad to see you, John."

Mrs. Bruce is at the window, still stitching a collar; but her hands are idle just now, and she is looking over her spectacles at something on the table. David, too, hangs over this something on the table with affectionate solicitude—what is it?

It is a heap of paper, which Joseph Davies, who has seen it through the half-open Venetian blind, thinks is "ever so many sermons." And David looks at it with side-long looks of love, as he puts that sheet of

brown paper tenderly round it, and his mother seems interested and anxious; what can it be?

Look at the address, as David writes it carefully in his best hand, and you will guess. He is going to take it to the railway now, to send it off with joyous, fearful, fluttering hopes to the great London publisher. But even now, as he prepares to send it off, David has not formed any opinion of his book. He is its father, and greatly liking his child, could not come to a cool critical judgment, but is in a little flutter to know if strangers will like it, and invests all manner of critics at once with a dignified superiority to himself. For David, though the poet's vague consciousness of power is about him, and though he has dreamed all his life of producing "he knows not what

excelling thing," has still an entire want of perception that there is anything remarkable in himself. He fancies, some way, that other people have not had their thoughts turned in the same channel; or that they have lacked the impulse to express their thoughts; or finally, that these people in Liverpool, surrounding him, are the dullest people in the world, and that genius and heroic virtues abound everywhere, but only here.

Nevertheless there is not the least doubt of success in his present thoughts. Success—he speaks of it sometimes, but he does not at all know or realise what it is; and it is of this, his child itself, and of how it will be *liked* and spoken of in the great glorious world, which he sees full of ideal men and women, noble and pure as his

own fancies, that the dreamer thinks, in his little flutter of hope and anticipated joy.

It is put aside when the visitor enters, and stands there on that little shelf in the recess quietly, and looks quite harmless and unimportant; prosaic John Drayton sees it as he comes in, and calls it a brown paper parcel!

A brown paper parcel!—so it is always; and one man sees grand visions and clustering hopes and solaces continually, in that which is but a brown paper parcel to another.

"I've been thinking, Mr. Bruce," said John, "if I could only get into one of the American steamers—I'd do."

"But the engineers in the American steamers are experienced men, John," said David.

"I don't mean first engineer, Sir. He's a gentleman, and has a great income. I mean one of the engineer's crew; and Mr. Shafton, I think, could get me in if he would."

"If that's all, there's no fear of you, John," said David. "What Mr. Shafton *can* do that's good and generous, he is pretty sure to *will*; but why do you want to go to sea?"

"There's no work—at least I can't hear of any—anywhere," said John; "and I've got some people—people over yonder in Halifax, I'd like to see again."

And John looked down into the cap he was twirling in his hands, and blushed and looked sheepish—and David understood him.

"Come along—we'll go up to Shafton,

John, and try what we can do," said David, taking his hat.

"But, Davie, my man, Mr. Shafton and the railway are in different airts, and how will you do with *it*?" said Mrs. Bruce, looking at the mysterious parcel.

Wistfully, lovingly, David looked at *it*, and hesitated.

"That's only our own concern," said David. "I'll take it in the morning when I go to the office, mother; for we're sure to find Shafton at home to-night, and John can't afford to lose his time."

Mrs. Bruce adjusted her spectacles, and drew the linen over her finger for her everlasting stitching.

"You're not an ill laddie, Davie," said his mother; "go your ways. I wish you good success, John, for they tell me you're

a good son; and the two lads you have to do with are not ill ones, so I think there's little fear."

And so they went away over the leafy suburban road, and through the fields towards Walton. A pleasant road it was, leading round the brow of the hill, and overlooking the whole great town for one stretch, and then the sea. Groups of evening walkers met them at every corner; and yonder on that upper field, the lads are playing cricket, and here, below, where the grass slopes pleasantly down to the high road, the children cover it so thickly that far away you might take their little heads for daisies; and sweetly sounds the childish laughter and the childish voices, and dogs are barking far away into the gloom of the town, and the tumultous

streets send up a softened and not unhappy sound; and beyond all is the river and the sea, and the sun going down into its waves.

"Don't you think they could be persuaded to come home, those people in Halifax?" said David Bruce.

"I tried all I could before they went away," said John, "but it wouldn't do."

"And do you intend to settle out yonder, yourself John?" asked David.

"I'd like to be an Englishman all my life, Sir. I'd like to be a decent man, and have some say among the rest here at home, if I could—for they want working-men who know about all that stuff—the Chartist lectures, and all the rest of it—

to be among them and take care of them;" said John, "but suppose a man likes two things very well; if he can't get them both, he'll maybe have to give up one to get the other; and I wouldn't wonder if that was my case, Mr. Bruce; for you see there's a whole family out yonder, and they'd all go wrong if it wasn't for *her*."

"A very good reason for your preadventure, John;" said David, "but I thought you had been a Chartist yourself."

"I wouldn't be against the Charter," said John, "it's not it itself; but they've got all sorts of rubbish that they tack to it, fraternity and equality and that stuff. There's nothing bad in the Charter that I can see; but it's not votes they want,

Mr. Bruce; they want to be made *men*—and the Charter wont make them men."

"No, very true—but men must make themselves," said David, "and that, God helping them, is in the reach of all."

"I'll tell you, Mr. Bruce," said John, "I'm not the sort of man to speak about Gospels, now that I know what's the one Gospel, and that it's as fresh and strong to-day as it was in Jerusalem, but I think that's the sermon for the working-man—*that*, that you said long ago; I've always had it in my mind. 'Every man for himself and God for us all.'"

"They would think you very cold-hearted if they heard you say that, John," said David. "So would Mr. Shafton; for Shafton

does not know that he has a self, but thinks first of all the world."

"Mr. Shafton's not like common men, Sir, he's by himself; but for our class—*my* class," said John, "if I was prime minister, Mr. Bruce, I'll tell you what I'd do."

"Well?" David listened curiously and with a smile.

"I'd have education first, and the Gospel—not any new-fashioned thing, about the Saviour being a wonderful genius or a hero, or anything like that; for what do men care to hear about heroes who died eighteen hundred years ago? But the old true Gospel that Paul preached when he made tents. I'd have that everywhere. It's a whole nation of men that's to be saved, and what

does it matter who preaches it, as long as they have hold of Him, and cling to Him like men? I'd have schools and books; the old grand books—everywhere, and I'd make men who went about to teach and lecture, teach—not the common stuff they call equality—but what's true brotherhood. That it's as noble to be a good working-man as a good Duke, and sometimes harder; and that it's *in* every man if he tries and labours to be equal with the best, and that God's over all—the Head of all—God and the Lord—and so I'd make them *men*."

There was a pause, for John felt it all deeply, and his voice grew hoarse at the end.

"Yes, but it would not go into an act of parliament," said David at length after

a long interval of silence, "and the times must ripen long before the prime minister will think of that; but come home and *live* it John, and let your brethren see."

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Shafton sits in a large room darkened with books; but yet, when you look within the glazed cases, you see that this is not the den of a bookworm; for they are all very gay, gilt, and lettered—too gay, John fancies, to be intimate familiars and every-day friends; and John is partly right.

Of modern literature, it is a capital library; and Mr. Shafton likes his books—likes to

look at them—to read a title, now and then, as he walks round his stately book-cases, and admire them all; and when David Bruce reads aloud to him, he could listen for ever. A very lovely sound of one that playeth well upon an instrument, it is to Mr. Shafton. He acknowledges rapturously the beauty of the music, but much of it is an unknown tongue to him, and he does not comprehend the words.

So, with all the wealth of those rich shelves encircling him, he sits in a luxurious reclining chair, with a little homely practical religious treatise in his hand; very humble, very unpretentious is the book, in its dark cloth boards; and it professes to be the lucubrations of an old man, who writes periodically in a little religious magazine. It is all "very good advice," as the people say;

and very charitable, and prudent, and pious, you can fancy, the old man is who writes it; and kind little hints are there, which Mr. Shafton fancies he needs, and likes to have administered to him; though, in reality, there is no one in the world who needs them so little as Mr. Shafton.

They have a long conversation, and Mr. Shafton is very much interested in John, and promises all his influence to help him; and much talk follows. They are both quite simple, quite unconscious of anything noteworthy about themselves, those two young men, as John sits looking at them—the one in his luxurious library chair, with the Tract Society's little volume under his elbow, and his very youthful-looking, ingenuous face, turned in a glow of admiration towards David; and the other, in a coat which has

had the gloss worn off it by long contact with the desk, leaning his arms upon the table, and looking out, with that strange shifting radiance playing about his face, from between the hands which support his high, pale brow. And David speaks, and Shafton listens; and now David listens, and Shafton speaks. Both would reform the world, and both speak of it with enthusiasm, as becomes young men; but the poet thinks of the great universal human nature, which is the material in which he must work, appointed by God; and the other's thoughts are of clean houses, and men who go to church, and children trooping into the Sabbath-school; and John feels that he could not choose between them, for both are best.

A week passes, and again John is looking out vainly for work. Mr. Shafton is to let

him know when he hears anything; but he cannot expect to hear anything decisive for a full fortnight. To save the expense of lodgings, John every night goes home, and sleeps in his old attic room; and every morning, early, is over in town again, that he may lose no chance of work.

The fortnight is out—three weeks—and still John is idle; and now his money is exhausted, and he has no resource but that one which he felt as a humiliation before. So again John takes his place among the cotton porters—again waits, standing by the wall, there in the sunshine in that street where every one is so busy, until some all-powerful warehouseman will give him work.

And very little work there is at that. He gets a day now and then, and carries

his three and sixpence sadly home on Friday; for what will three and sixpence do, to maintain the little household for a week—even with the good help of the garden.

The cottage wall and porch are flushed with roses. It is the evening, and John with his jacket off is busily working in the garden, delving the little piece of vacant ground, where once were the very early potatoes, which his mother happily sold the last of on Saturday, and weeding—for there has been rain, and the ungracious herbage grows apace.

"You won't be long at this work, John," said a voice beside him, and John's spade fell from his hand in sudden anxiety, as he looked up and saw Mr. Shafton.

"You're to go over to the office, to-morrow, John," said Mr. Shafton with his happy smile; "it'll be all right; I think you'll find it all right."

And straightway Mr. Shafton began to admire the peas, and to speak of the delicate bean-blossom then just beginning to scent the air, so hurriedly, that all John's thanks were drowned. Mr. Shafton was not naturally a talkative man, but he had a strange gift of rapid speaking, when he wanted to escape being thanked, and that happened so often that he had grown expert, and knew capitally how to talk a grateful man down.

"Mrs. Drayton, may I have some roses? not full—this, see, and this—just half-blown; they're for Miss Power, John," said Mr. Shafton, sinking his voice, and looking con-

sciously, with that happy blush and smile of his, at the sympathetic John. Mrs. Drayton went briskly about with her garden knife to cut them; but Mrs. Drayton had no remembered Rachel to inspire her in behalf of the Mary, and was cutting buds like cabbages, on the same principle as she cut them for her market nosegays—to look big and fill up room; so John, the sympathetic, took the knife from her hand, and himself selected delicate rosebuds, worthy of their destination, with a pleasant tremor in his frame; for it was a rose from this very tree which Rachel was to keep till she came home.

Home! but it might be made for them in another country, that magical resting-place. He thought of it, and tears came into his eyes. Through the little latticed

window beside him, with the geraniums on its ledge, and the rose-branches waving round it, he has a glimpse of the old man dozing near the fire in the easy chair; and there Mrs. Drayton in a corner of the garden covers up her rhubarb that it may not get too strong and coarse; and everything is happy, and peaceful, and kindred to them from the low oak yonder, bending over the garden hedge, and the ash with its high white stem, waving its thin foliage over the roof, to the square gray church tower in the distance, and the low bleak hill striking against the sky; very blank and dead, John feels, all this would grow if himself, the young life, went away to build in another country an alien dwelling-place; and the tears are under his eyelids.

They would fade into the grave, those old lonely people who once nourished him so tenderly — bustling strangers would jostle them away off the full stage of life; and moss would gather on their humble tombstone, and their humble honest name would be extinguished, and sadly they would pass away, childless in the land. It must not be, whatever the pang is; he may never have the home he dreams of, he thinks, as he draws his hand across his eyes, but his home must be in England.

Mr. Shafton is looking at his roses—he does not know the mental struggle which marks in John's secret history the time of their gathering—and he points out on the soft leaves, lingering raindrops from the last shower, "They look like tears John," said Mr. Shafton; and John feels as if there

were a delicate sympathy in nature, which is moved by his trials, and weeps for him when he dare not be seen to weep.

Very soon it is all arranged. He is to have six pounds a month — very great wages—and Mrs. Drayton is dazzled and almost reconciled to the voyage which is to bring in so much money. He is to join the ship immediately, and has only ten days to make ready, so there are great preparations begun in the cottage without delay.

Only two letters has John received from Rachel, and the second one like the first, was very short and very grave, and written in a sad despondent tone, which, at the time depressed him greatly. He has written several times, but it does not occur to him to send any word now when he will see her

so soon—and all the despondency, both his own and her's, vanishes when he thinks of this meeting in which there can be nothing but sunshine and joy.

The time draws on; they are very short, Mrs. Drayton thinks, these bright days of June, and Sarah Jane, widow Hornby's daughter, whom she has in helping to make John's outfit, dawdles sadly over his shirts, and is by no means a good seamstress. Mrs. Drayton is cumbered with many cares—so many that she almost forgets the cause of them all—the great trial that awaits her, and cannot realize that John is going to sea.

But it comes; and she remembers when she packs his great sea-chest, and weeps over the new shirts as she lays them in. He is going away—not a hundred but many

thousand miles—what used to be a sad life's journey when she was young; and Mrs. Drayton will not believe that people go in a fortnight now, and that the ships come in almost as punctually as the omnibuses do, over in Liverpool. She thinks of long tempests, lasting through weary weeks, and contrary winds—those rough wild winds which sweep over the hill of the telegraph so furiously, and blight and break the trees, so that between the village and the sea the oaks are little higher than men, and knotted and gnarled like fierce dwarfs by constant resistance, resist still, although their scanty leafage seems scarcely worth such desperate wrestling for. Never is there a carnival of the winds but that corner of Cheshire wots of it; and Mrs. Drayton thinks of them, and weeps and trembles.

The morning rises. Never more brightly rose a morning in leafy June, and the good mother is up almost before the wakeful birds. Softly she steals about, looking if there is anything forgotten—anything more to put into the chest, which stands mournfully on the kitchen floor, with the key in its lock, ready to be carried away; but nothing has been forgotten; and now she goes out to the garden to pull some stalks of fragrant lavender, and add them to John's more substantial stores. Not a breeze lifts the long rose-branches glistening in the dew, and the clouds up on the far blue sky lie still, like ships becalmed, and the very breath of the mighty earth seems to come softly, as though great love had hushed it, as the universal mother dreamed of her sons at sea.

But the breakfast hour hurries on—that dull, silent breakfast, saddest of all meals, when a parting is to follow. And now the cart is at the end of the lane, waiting for John's chest, and John himself must set out at once, to be on board in good time.

"Fare-thee-well, lad! I'll maybe never see thee again," said the old man, with a few feeble sobs; "but if I be gone afore you come back, you'll be kind to your mother all the same. Fare-thee-well."

And now they are out in the lane, walking slowly after the cart. Poor Mrs. Drayton has her best bonnet on, but the tears fall on the ribbons, and she heeds them not.

"It's nothing, mother; I'll be there on Saturday week," says John, as she leans

heavily upon his arm; but she only weeps, and shakes her head.

She knows better, she thinks—for people do not sail three thousand miles in ten short summer days.

She is glad that the way is so long, and glad that they have to walk so slowly after that rumbling, heavy cart. She is almost glad, too, the poor mother, that so many new roads are making for this magnificent skeleton town of Birkenhead, and that they can scarcely find one far enough advanced to travel on; but in spite of all obstacles — sadly too soon the bright river flashes into sight, and they have reached the ferry.

Yonder, up within that placid bay above Tranmere, lies the great steamer. Puffs of white steam blow off now and then—notes

of preparation — and a little steam-boat ceaselessly runs errands for her to the shore, conveying goods and passengers — household treasures from many a saddened home —to cover her great decks with them; and ruthlessly she lies there receiving all.

But now the ferry-boat glides over the calm river, and on the great landing stage— then a new wonder—Mrs. Drayton stands with her son to say farewell. Already his chest is in the "Satellite;" and rushing from the "Satellite's" safety valve comes the white violent steam, and the passengers crowd in, and the man is at the wheel, and the Captain, on the paddle-box, shouts, "Now, then!" to hasten John, as he lingers on the gangway; and in a moment after the waves are churning under the great wheels, and her son is away.

She sees him through her tears waving his cap to her still, as the little vessel fumes across the river; and as it hurries further and further off, he comes to the stern, and stands high up, that she may not lose sight of him to the last. The young rose in his breast; his cap in his hand; and so she takes her last look of John.

Poor Mrs. Drayton! those quick ferry-boats skim past her like phantoms, and she sees them not; but with a great boom the clock strikes twelve and the bell rings; and now she remembers she must be on the hill at two, when the steamer sails, to see her pass away into the unknown seas.

Wearily now, plodding back again, she goes over those solitary roads. The men who were working at them have all gone

home to dinner, except one here and there, who sits in a grassy corner, or on a great stone, with a basin between his knees and a pitcher beside him, taking the dinner which that little girl, or the wife yonder, with the baby in her shawl, has carried from the distant home. But Mrs. Drayton, with her dim eyes, sees no one, and thinks the road never was so lonely before.

And now she has reached the hill—very still, yonder lies the sea, with solemn sails gliding over it, in silence under the sun. Mrs. Drayton sits down on a shelving rock, to cry awhile undisturbed, where no one is near to vex her with comfort; and again she thinks she sees him through her tears—her good son—with his manly head bare under the sky, and the half-blown rose in his breast.

But now it sounds—the gun! and in a

moment her tears are all away, and she rises with eyes keen as the watchman's on the top of the telegraph tower, to see the ship go out. The moments pass very slowly; she thinks it takes a long time to go down the river; but now it passes out from the shadow of the rock, and is there before her on the sea.

Away like a flying spirit! and further off, and further, the black plume waves from among its masts, and the great hull sinks in the smooth line on the horizon's edge. Another long cry she has when it it is gone—and then she wipes her eyes and arranges her bonnet, and goes away refreshed and strengthened—for it does fly like a bird, that great, strong, vigorous steamer — to comfort her old man at home.

And John is out on the blue, bright

waves, travelling away again into that unknown which has so great a charm; or rather John is *in* to the hot engine-room, amidships, and is becoming acquainted with the other smutted spirits, who tend and curb, and keep in order the strange, mysterious, plunging steed which carries the vessel on. And the clean steel and burnished brass of those pipes and pistons, which curious passengers look in to see, and the constant see-saw clang they make, as the giant in his seven-leagued boots strides on over the clear sea-water, have harmony in them to John's accustomed senses. No one is sick — not even the ladies under the parasols on the quarter-deck; and the sun sets, and the moon comes up, with a serene family of stars about her, and out in the clear blue, which

may be either sea or sky, both are so calm, holds up her silver lamp, and bears the ship company like a silent friend. Hopeful thoughts, under that meek eye of hers, steal into many hearts which said farewell to-day heavily: and as he lingers on deck, after his watch is over, pleasant visions of the home which is to be, charm John's thoughts again, and all his doubts and misgivings, like the clouds of yesterday, have melted in a few soft tears, into the sea.

CHAPTER IX.

STORMS passed over the skies sometimes through those ten days, but John's first voyage was a pleasant one, and he was very much at home in the ship, and accustomed to its labours, before they neared the American shore. Day by day, as they hurried over the bright waters, John's heart rose. All the broodings of the unhappy time of indolence, now over-

past, have left him like so many mists. The good wholesome *work* is his mind's best physic; and now as they sail into the west, and the home twilight ceases to interpose its meditative hour between the night and day, and suddenly the darkness falls upon the light like the closing of an eyelid, John leans over the ship's side, as she cuts her way through the rippling water, and happily dreams—dreams more happily than he ever did before.

Prosaic people think him listless and idle, as, his worktime over, he leans upon the bulwark, looking hazily down upon the sea. "Would he not be far better employed, reading and improving his mind?" says the grave gentleman there, who lends about little shilling books among the

sailors, and is very anxious to be "useful," so long as he remains in the ship. No, good gentleman. The shilling books are very well—better are the dreams, the youth's inheritance, which glorify the future for him with bright forms and sunshine. Not a fool's paradise does he dream of. He dreams of a grand being harmoniously walking on this earth, which is God's, following in the footsteps of a holy and great One who goes before. He dreams of a man, fulfilling all the noble functions of humanity — a man who has been *redeemed;* and about his path sweet human charities cluster like flowers, and in his arms he lifts up little children—up, to look at the heavens—the infinite broad heavens which smile upon him, and bend over

him, embracing him in their arms of love.

And this man—oh, joy to dream it!—this man is to be himself—himself eating bread in the sweat of his brow, labouring with hard hands for his beloved—himself is to be this man! A man for whom the great world will concert harmonies—for whom the stars will sing in their courses—grand music to time his marching to!—for whom yonder glorious Wayfarer, in the path before him, underwent his mighty travail—and the human heart swells solemnly to follow on—on after the Lord.

"Whoso hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." It is the secret of the new manhood high and holy; and joyously the happinesses of

common life blend and mingle and twine themselves around it, and scenes rise up serene and beautiful of the charmed days that are to come.

Lay down your little books, good gentleman, and stand aside; let the young soul look forth upon this ideal path, which it must tread for itself, and not another. While those blue soft waters glide away under the flying keel, his heart grows strong, and expands, rising, with a heroic swell, to meet the perils and troubles which do but make the future's shining highway nobler. Stand aside, and let him dream.

And now comes the land. It is night when the great boyish exuberant Continent of the West rises before the traveller—deep, silent night, an hour or two before day-break—and the ships are slumbering in

the silvery harbour, and white listless sails flap drowsily over the little boats, that rock themselves—softly, like children half asleep—upon the silken water. White in the moonlight glimmer, the sleeping town, its woes and its blessedness, all lulled and silent within that soft mantle of rest; and John steals eagerly up—high up to the yards to look out, with a beating heart, upon the gleaming roofs, quivering with light from that great, lustrous, melancholy moon.

In those days the steamer remained nearly a whole day in Halifax; it was to sail again in the evening, and John anxiously asked and obtained leave to spend the day ashore.

He had the address which Rachel had sent to him. It was in an obscure street

in the outskirts of the town, and one of his precious hours was lost before he could find it. When he did find it, the Wylds were gone; no one could tell him where, nor give him any clew by which to find them. One neighbour believed they had all had the fever; another had heard that Wyld himself was dead; but where they were to be found, or what had really become of them, no one knew.

One sympathetic woman compassionating John's distress, volunteered to make inquiries, and he eagerly accepted her offered assistance. She would find them out if it were possible to find them, she promised, before the ship returned to Halifax, and with that small consolation John was compelled to be content.

But he continued to wander, miserably,

about the streets, all the time his leave extended, looking into the faces he met with painful anxious looks: but all were strange. It was a sultry July day, warmer than he had ever felt a day in England, and hot and oppressive were those unknown streets. He had come so expectant and joyously, that when he climbed the ship's side again in the afternoon, his great disappointment exaggerated itself almost into despair.

They were to sail immediately, and when they returned would be only a few hours in Halifax; and he thought of returning to England again with his aim unaccomplished, although, perhaps, he had passed the very street—the very house where Rachel lived. Poor John! he could scarcely drag himself away from the deck, where he could still

look wistfully at the roofs, some one of which hid his friends from him, to the close hot engine-room, where his labour lay.

And again the great wheels began to churn the quiet water, and they had resumed their journey.

A little time, and even hearts sick will resume their elasticity. John begged already, before they reached Boston, that when they returned to Halifax, he might have their time there to himself to prosecute his search; and with some difficulty his request was granted. Again he began to hope—if man could do it, this time he would find them out.

Slowly the days passed; his mind was so much preoccupied, that he had little curiosity even for the New World. He was sick of

Boston, sick of the long sunshine glaring down its streets, and flashing in the dazzled sea, and only eager and impatient for the day when they should sail again.

When they did sail again it was into a storm, which occupied all minds fully, from the anxious captain's on the gangway, to the disappointed engineer in the engine-room. Plunging and struggling like a restive horse, the vessel needed all the care bestowed upon her to keep her in her course, and there was no time for private anxieties; so many a sick anticipation the tempest saved to John.

And now on a soft, dim rainy morning they have anchored again before Halifax.

The streets are wet, and prudent people,

with red and blue umbrellas, step daintily over the muddy pavement, but unwitting of mud or rain, John splashes on to the house of his sympathetic friend. But the woman, still sympathetic and full of pity for his sickened heart and blank face, has no news to give him. She has made many inquiries, and has thought herself several times just on the eve of finding them, but has not succeeded.

So John turns away, and hopelessly looking under umbrellas and into bonnets, and getting himself a bad character for impertinence, walks mile after mile about those disconsolate streets.

But look yonder, before him! some one—a woman with a black riband on her bonnet, and a thin shawl clinging to her very thin figure, walks feebly, close by the wall. He

does not know her—and yet his pulse beats high, and he hears his heart sounding against his side. Heavy drops fall upon her from the eaves, and her slow, languid steps look very feeble. He does not know her—but he presses on.

And now she stops at a street corner to rest for a moment, and turns round to him a white, invalid face. The dark eyes are enlarged and sunken, and wet is the lock of light brown hair which, escaped from under her bonnet, clings to the old thin shawl. He catches, in one glance, the particulars of the change, as a wild leap brings him to her side.

"Rachel!"

"Rachel!" She thinks the voice is in the air, and that her mind is wandering, and closing her eyes because they are blind,

and she cannot see anything out of them, she leans on the wall, and prays silently, with pale, moving lips, that her reason may not fail her now. Strength and health, both of them, are gone; but her mind—her mind the last stay—that it may not sink yet, while they are helpless and among strangers here.

But some one supports her—strongly—eagerly.

"Who is it?" says Rachel, in a dream, as the warm tears begin to run over her cheek, and a voice is saying something in her ear—something—she cannot tell what it is—but she knows the voice.

She thinks she will fall, she is so feeble; but she does not fall—she only leans upon the other, who is strong, and cries silently, and cannot speak. *He* speaks, but it is a

long time before she can distinguish the words; she is content with the voice, which she knows so well—the old, familiar music.

And now the sight comes back to her eyes, and the sickness goes away. She remembers that they are standing in the street, and that the passers-by look wonderingly at them from under the red and blue umbrellas. A slight, delicate blush steals over her white cheek, and she lays her hand on John's arm—such an arm! she never knew before how strong it was—and says: "Let us go home."

And they go away together, as if they had never parted. But Rachel is very weak; she cannot keep down those tears that come stealing to her eyes, and her voice is little louder than a whisper, and

she has to lean almost her whole weight upon him, and to walk very slowly through the rain. And John has her little basket in his hand, and now, after her excitement and sickness of sudden joy, she feels cold and trembles; and wonderingly and pitifully the strong man—he looks such a Hercules beside her — looks down into her pale face.

"John," said Rachel, "my father is dead."

His face grows grave—not sorrowful perhaps — but grave and awed to hear of it.

"He died in the fever, two months ago, and we've all had it—we've both had it," said Rachel.

"And, Rachel, your mother?" said John.

"My mother is better—we are both better

now, John," and the blood came again to the wan face. "What are you doing here? You haven't come for good?—not to stay?"

"I'm in the steamer," said John, and his voice saddened; "it's to sail to-night; I'll have to leave you again to-night, Rachel."

The tears would have burst forth again, she was so weak; but the womanly pride restrained them. She glanced up for a moment wistfully to his face.

"I got a place in the steamer on purpose," said John; "and when we came here, before we went on to Boston, I was all the time looking for you, and like to break my heart when I had to go away; now, I've only a few hours—but Rachel, you're not going to stay here now?"

"I don't know," said Rachel, in her low sad voice; for she was shy and downcast, and uncertain how to answer.

"But *I* know," said the bold John. "I've got a right to speak now. You were obliged to come out, but you're not obliged to stay; and the next time our ship comes out, you'll be ready to go home—mind. I'll have my own way now."

"We could'nt go in the steamer, it's dear, John," said Rachel submissively.

It had not occurred to him, "I'd give your mother and you my berth, and stay on deck myself, as glad as could be," said John; but that would not do.

"If we're to go at all, we must go by a sailing ship again," said Rachel; "and John, it was awful coming out."

"Never mind, it's different, it's going

home now," said John; "and besides it's summer. It was a disgrace to take you out in November, Rachel. Where's George?"

"He sailed three months ago," said Rachel. "You know, John, how he said to my mother he'd get to sail constant out of Halifax; but he did'nt, for just after we came his ship was sold, and he was idle ever so long, and at last had to go with a ship from Liverpool—a long trading voyage out to China, and I don't know where besides—and he's to be two years away, and to come into Liverpool after all."

"All the better," said John; "and now I'll forgive him for taking you away; do you mind how he laughed yon time on the pier, Rachel, when your mother spoke to him about the wind?"

Rachel remembered it very well—very

well—it rung so strangely through her grief.

"There's ships going every fortnight," said John, "and when you can't go in the steamer, Rachel, why shouldn't you start at once? You've got nothing to keep you here."

"There's some things to sell," said Rachel, "maybe as many as will get money to take us home; but I'd like to be stronger first to take care of my mother; and you'll have to speak to her John."

"I wish you could have gone in the steamer, it's so much shorter," said John, "and I'd have been there myself to see that you were comfortable; but it can't be helped, you know, Rachel—I've got a good place, and it was hard to get it; so I must keep it awhile—in particular *now*."

"And must you always go to sea, John?"

said Rachel disconsolately, "couldn't you get a place at home."

"Mr. Shafton's going to start a new foundry, at least he's going to join Mr. Power;" said John, "it wont be for seven or eight months yet, but I'm sure of a place then; and we'll get the old house, Rachel—no fear of us, if you'll only come home, and get well."

And very willing Rachel is to come home and get well; and just now, as she looks up to her strong supporter with a smile upon her face, and does not feel the rain that falls softly on it, she forgets all about her distress and sickness, and they speak of the home which John has been dreaming about, and forget that they are in the strange streets of Halifax, and are very happy.

But now they have reached the house

where the mother and the daughter, in grief and sickness, have lived for these three memorable months. They have only one room, and it is small and scantily furnished, and gaps here and there, show that the household things they had accumulated before, have been gradually diminishing during this illness. Mrs. Wyld like her daughter is very weak; but on the table lies some work, at which, in spite of her weakness, Rachel has been labouring; for they have nothing and are among strangers.

"The old man at home is very weakly," said John, "and we'll have to consider how we'll do, to be for the best, when we're all together. You'll maybe have hard work getting ends to meet Rachel, by and bye: but I must mind the old folks,

at home, as you bade me long ago. I think Mrs. Wyld, if you'd just go there, as long as I'm at sea, it wouldn't matter having another house, and the country air would do you good, and when the foundry opened we could have the old house again; will that do?"

"But I'll be a burden on you all," said Mrs. Wyld crying feebly, "Oh, maybe Rachel was right, John—maybe I shouldn't have come, and then we'd have missed all this trouble: but if he had died by himself, and nobody to say a word to him, I'd have broken my heart!"

"It's been for the best, mother," said Rachel, "I was against it, but I wouldn't have been, if I had known what was to happen—I'm thankful now we came."

"And I'd just like to hear any one

else say a word about a burden," said John, "if it was Rachel herself: but now I'd like you to make up your minds and fix what ship you'll go by, before I go away."

CHAPTER X.

They have gathered round their homely tea-table, as they used to do in the little bright Everton room. Rachel has been away changing her wet dress, and has her best one on now, till the other is sufficiently dry to be worn; and over this best black gown, which would be easily spoiled, and which Rachel cannot afford to put in peril, she has tied a great white apron. Mrs. Wyld, too, has a

black gown, and a widow's cap; and very hard Rachel laboured, and very sparingly lived, before they took the fever, to enable them to pay those outward tokens of respect to the dead; but these were very costly "mournings," for the labour they entailed weakened the workers, and rendered them the more liable to the contagion.

John has laid his silver watch on the table, that he may not stay too long. He got it long ago, and Mrs. Wyld has seen it before, but she takes it up again to admire it. They have *his* watch still, but will need to sell it, with the other things, to enable them to get home; and far better do that, Mrs. Wyld thinks, than take the money John presses on her. It is not very much he has, poor fellow, and their fare home will not be great; though it is a great sum to them.

"If George had only been in, poor lad," said Mrs. Wyld, "he'd give the last penny he had to make us comfortable; and when he does come in, John, he'll do something for his mother—no fear of my George; but I think we'll do, with the things we have to sell; we'll very near do, at any rate."

The contents of John's purse—it was but light at first, and is quite empty now—were added to the little store; and it was arranged that in a fortnight after, they should sail.

"I'll be at sea when you get in," said John, "but I won't be long after you; our boat comes in as regular as a coach; and I'll leave word with my mother to be meeting you on the Pier. But if you should miss her—she doesn't know very well about such things—you'll just go over home at once;

she's sure to be ready for you. Now, you'll promise me, Mrs. Wyld?"

"But your mother won't care to have me. I'm a quiet body, John; I'd give very little trouble; but your mother's been used to have the house to herself, and she'll think me a bother, John."

"She's not the one," said John, proudly. "She's got as kind a heart as ever was, and she'll try to make you comfortable, I know. Wasn't you good to her that time when I was in trouble? and weren't you always good to me?—it's our turn now; besides, there's my father—he's very weakly—and my mother can't always get to the market, for waiting on him. You'll be a famous help, Mrs. Wyld; and for Rachel—Rachel knows my mother—I can fancy how bright the old house will grow to have Rachel in it again."

Very bright grew Rachel's face.

"I'll be very busy, John," she said, with a smile.

"I'll leave word with my mother she's not to let you," said John; "you get well and strong, that's plenty for you to do till I come back; isn't it, Mrs. Wyld?"

Mrs. Wyld shook her head, but smiled with them; for the fresh English cottage, "at home," and the native skies and air, were pleasant, very pleasant to anticipate: and she could fancy already the delight of seeing the sunshine come back to the pale face of Rachel, and happy labour, enough and not too much, filling the wholesome days again.

"And now I'll have to go away," said John, looking again at his great silver watch; "are you able to walk a bit with

me, Rachel, or must I part with you here?"

It was still drizzling, and Rachel looked dubiously at her best gown; but the other one was fortunately dry, and she ran away to put it on again.

"Mind you've promised just to go home at once, Mrs. Wyld," repeated John, as he shook hands with her, "and I'll not be long till I see you again. Good bye."

Good bye; and Mrs. Wyld looks after them from the window, and feels proud that the neighbours see them walking together along the stranger street.

And Rachel is stronger now, and the streets no longer swim in her dim eyes, as she leans upon that strong manful arm of his; and they have much to speak of on the way—much which belongs only to

their own individual selves—which might not sound like very good sense to a third party who listened, but which is better than sense, and exceedingly agreeable to them.

And so he is gone—Rachel stands looking after him, till her head begins to grow dizzy again; and then, through the rain, she turns happily back, to prepare for the journey — the pleasant journey home.

They are still preparing for it, and the day is very close at hand when they must sail, when Mrs. Drayton, in her cottage, hears a gun echoing over the plain from the sea. The little pan with the gruel falls from her hand, and she holds her breast, within which the heart is leaping like a bird.

"Jane, thou's not shot," said the old man, looking up with some anxiety; "but sure enough thou's spilt all the gruel."

"Don't you hear, old man?" cried the good mother; "there, it is—the other one! and he's come—he's come back, my Johnnie! my good lad!"

"But Jane, what telled thee?" said old John, looking round with a little superstitious tremor, for he was growing deaf, and dim of sight; "thou doesn't see nothing, Jane?"

"It's the guns!—the guns—don't you hear? I'll sit up all night for fear he comes home; oh, my Johnnie! It's the ship come back—it's the guns!"

But the morning had risen brightly, and the good mother, starting at every sound,

had put on a clean gown, and a clean cap, and a spotless white apron, and in this festal guise had wandered out down the lane to look for him, before John came home.

"Oh, Johnnie! oh, my lad!" exclaimed Mrs. Drayton; "I knew you'd come back, and oh, I'm thankful! but I thought you never come, Johnnie; and I've been looking for you all night."

"I couldn't get sooner, mother," said John. "I've half run, all the way from the ferry—how's my father?"

"Oh, he's well, Johnnie; I mean he's getting very frail, poor old man; but weren't you wearied of the sea—and how did you like the boat—and did you see Rachel Wyld—and what sort of a place is America, John?"

"I've seen Rachel Wyld, mother; her father's dead, and she's coming home," said John; "they've been very ill, both Mrs. Wyld and Rachel; and, mother, they're coming home to you."

"But what will I do with them, Johnnie?"

"Don't you know, mother?" said John, blushing, as he looked into his mother's face.

"Ay bless thee, I know: did you think you could keep it from me?" said Mrs. Drayton brightening. "I can put one thing to another as well as most people; and she's a good lass. I wish she'd been here, when your new shirts were made, John, instead of that Sarah Jane, taking a shilling a day for making fun over them: but did you say they were to come to the cottage, John?"

"There's the attic, mother," said John, "and there's the little closet at the back when I'm at home; there's lots of room—and I don't see any use for taking another house as long as I'm at sea."

"No, sure, there's plenty room," said his mother, "and you'll live at home the time the ship's in—every day as well as Sunday—won't you, John? and I'll be as good to them as ever I can be."

"I knew you would, mother," said John, gratefully. "Mrs. Wyld thought she'd be a bother, poor body, but I told her you had the kindest heart in the world."

"Well, I try to do my best," said the gratified mother, "and once they were kind to you, Johnnie; and they're fond of you—don't you think I found that out long ago? maybe, before you did yourself."

And John blushed, and was gratified too; and Mrs. Drayton proudly took his arm, and they went slowly down the lane to the cottage, where old John had wakened already, and was lying staring round the walls, and calling out for Jane.

"When are they to come, and when is it to be, John?" asked Mrs. Drayton. "Is it so hot in America, that you've got all brown? but you needn't get all red too, when it's only your mother you're speaking to."

"They'll be sailing, about now, mother," said John, smiling very joyfully over his blush. "I suppose, in about a month at furthest, they'll get in; and it's to be, I suppose, next time I come home, after that, if Rachel doesn't say no, mother."

Mrs. Drayton looked at him; he was

smiling to himself all over his brown, blushing, happy face, and the mother laughed aloud—for who could say no to John.

"And it'll be in Upton church, John?" said Mrs. Drayton. "I shouldn't wonder if the vicar gave you a Bible—I've known him do that to a young couple before now—and he won't see many young couples like you and Rachel."

"I don't believe there's above three or four in the world as good as Rachel, mother," said John, solemnly.

And Mrs. Drayton looked at him again. She was quite willing that Rachel should stand on an eminence among three or four, because her John—her good lad—was, alone; the best son in the world.

"Jane! Jane!"

The old man's voice startled them, ringing out querulous and feeble; and now his son is by his bed-side.

"I'm very frail, lad—very frail—but I'm thankful to see thee back again. I didn't think I'd last as long," said old John. "It's a terrible hard thing to get shut of an old man—it's a long job, is this; and may be I'll see your children yet, John."

"Ay, no fear of you," said his wife. "Now, old man, get up, and let the lad have some breakfast; he's come far to get it—all the way from America—and I won't have him hungered now."

But as she boils eggs and makes coffee for this elaborate breakfast, every five minutes her labours are suspended to look at him, as he stands in the porch between

her and the sunshine. He has again a rose in the breast of the short coat which now he wears every day, and the hair is blowing lightly about his temples, and a smile hovers on his face, as he plays with the long branches of the rose-tree—Rachel's rose; and now he turns round to talk to her of Rachel—of the sea—and of the new world he has seen since he left home; and Mrs. Drayton, as she lays a snow-white cloth upon the table, and puts down the cups, thinks proudly that Rachel Wyld has a fate in store for her, higher than princesses or queens; for where is there another in the world like John?

But two bright weeks pass, and he must go away again. A great many charges he has given his mother about the Wylds, and, with a great many promises she has answered

him. Mrs. Wyld is to help her in her ceaseless attendance upon the old man, and John has unbounded faith in Rachel—Rachel will make sunshine, and find work for herself anywhere; he has no fear for her.

"And, mother, don't let her go and work too much, and hurt herself," urges John. "She isn't strong; make her go about the garden, and get roses on her cheeks by I come back."

"I'll think on, Johnnie," said Mrs. Drayton, "never you fear."

"I've told Tom Wood, at the docks, to bring you word when the ship's telegraphed, mother," said John; "and go and meet them, will you? Let Tom have some gooseberries for the children—he won't ask anything—and he'll take you to the

ship when she comes in. Now do—will you, mother?"

"I'd do it if I had to walk ten miles, Johnnie," said Mrs. Drayton; and so he went away on his second voyage.

Swiftly over those great seas came the sailing ship—swiftly—though with no supernatural steed to carry her on. Sometimes contrary winds, sometimes dead calms, kept her back a day or two; but within a month from their time of sailing, the eager passengers crowded to her deck to see the light at the Rock slowly turning on its friendly pivot, and tinging the water with its rays.

Far away yonder, that dim, sandy line marks the coast, with its range of dull bathing-places, on which the docks are gradually encroaching, chasing the bathers and the villas down to the wider sea. Here,

with scattered lights, lie the village towns of Cheshire, linked together by straggling houses. Over yonder, perturbed and dim, with one long line of light tracing its miles of docks, Liverpool sends up its smoke into the sky. Little steamers flash across the river hourly—for it is midnight—and far off you see their red and green lights, and hear a distant rustle as of some luminous insect flying on strong wings. The sky is pale and luminous too, and as the light, revolving, throws its illumination on the river, you see the ships moored in-shore, resting like quiet dwelling-places upon the unmoved water; and now and then a pilot-boat goes quickly down the river, manned by rough voyagers, who almost despise the night, for its beauty and its calm.

Look out, Rachel! yonder hangs a star over the round tower on the hill, and under it, down there in the hidden valley, the mother dreams of meeting you, and of the coming home. Lie down now, and for the last time, sleep with the water rippling by your ear—rippling softly, hushed, and quiet, under the stars—while this great sea-cradle, gently moving, rocks you to your slumber like a child. Far out on the bright seas, one wakes to think of your home-going, and sees you safe under the cottage-roof, saying prayers for him. Pray, and look to the west, Rachel, whence you have come—whither he travels—and now, with your heart quiet within you, lie down like a child, and sleep.

The attic in the cottage is very bright, and its window in the roof stands open to

let the sweet air enter. There is a white cover on the bed, and curtains under that low shelving roof would have been oppressive — it is better without them, Mrs. Drayton thinks. Three strips of carpet are on the floor—one of them red—one of them blue—for Mrs. Drayton likes the primary colours, and arranges them as Mr. Owen Jones himself would have arranged them had he been there to see—though the third is a secondary green which somewhat breaks the contrast. A white cover too is on the table, and roses and honeysuckle, a prodigal supply, fill the little basin and make the room rich with odours. You must stand on that low chair to look from the window, but the view is worth climbing for. Yonder lies the sea; and from this window, when the guns boom over the land again, Rachel will

watch the steamer come in—the precious vessel which brings John home.

Last night Tom Wood was here, bringing word that the ship was telegraphed, and Mrs. Drayton gathers a great basket full of gooseberries before she sets out this morning, as a reward for him when he meets her on the landing stage. Old John, with a newspaper and his spectacles, has been made comfortable in the easy chair, and Mrs. Drayton leaves the house in holiday order, and the kettle boiling by the fire, to be ready, even at midday, to refresh her guests with the universal cordial—the home cup of tea.

In a little boat, to the same stairs from which they set out, Rachel and her mother happily return; and as they look round, Rachel recalls their departing, and can smile now as she remembers George's laugh; but

there is Mrs. Drayton pressing forward to meet them, and Tom Wood behind with his gooseberries, and all faces look on the greeting smilingly, and the travellers feel that they have come home, and that all the bystanders are friends.

And at night, Rachel stands upon the chair, leaning out of the window upon the cottage thatch, and looking to the sea. Not so bright as in the western sky rises the quiet moon; but everywhere shine the friendly lights, from those still unextinguished in the village street, and in the high windows of the Grange, to those of the town far away, where they watch through all the night, and cheer the stranger like a voice. Some faint stir is in the ash over the roof there, with that star like a silver blossom, crowning its topmost bough, and the oak below mur-

murs softly like a running water, a sound of the land, not of the sea. Her mother is sleeping while Rachel looks out and dreams; and now softly she has descended, and leaves the window a little open, that even when her head is on the pillow she may see the sky; and so they sleep and are at rest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE cottage-door stands open; the geraniums from the window-ledge have been placed upon the step without the porch, to have the benefit of the gentle shower which is just over, and the air comes in, with the breath of the fresh-moistened earth upon it, as well as the odour of the flowers. The easy chair has been drawn to the window, and there, leaning back upon his

pillows, old John, with a little animation in his face, sits watching the work which goes on before him. At the door, upon a stool, is Rachel, with again her lilac gown, and her white linen collar, and her hair smoothly braided on the round, soft cheek. Her mother sits sewing at the table in the window behind the old man, and on the table lies the skirt of a dress, a large old-fashioned print, rich with primary colours, which Mrs. Wyld is just finishing. It is the "body" of the same dress which Rachel is working at with those white, nimble fingers of hers, while the old man looks on with a placid smile, and talks to her now and then caressingly. Mrs. Drayton has the little table lifted near the door, just behind Rachel, and now is finishing with much care, some very elaborate orna-

mental work on the cover of that great pie. She looks now and then with some pride at the gown, and the three old people are constantly saying witty things, which make poor Rachel blush as she bends over her work; for this is the eve of a great and eventful day.

And now a shadow falls across the floor, and there is John. The rain has wetted him a little, and stands in shining drops on his hair and on his blue cap and short coat; and the coat is buttoned over a parcel he carries, to keep it dry. Very interesting this parcel seems. Mrs. Drayton hastily pushes away the table she has been working at, and washes her hands to open it; and Mrs. Wyld puts down her work, and old John fumbles for his spectacles. Only Rachel steadfastly bends her head, and plies her needle, and remains unmoved, though

John stands before her, holding out his parcel, and tempting her with its hidden treasures.

And now slowly it is unfolded—a shawl —a white shawl, fit for a bride, with such a rich border as Mrs. Drayton never saw before. Loud admiring exclamations — a chorus of them—burst from the beholders, and Mrs. Wyld and Mrs. Drayton holding it between them, admire its texture, and old John touches it, and smiles and says it is a beauty. One glance, sidelong, Rachel herself throws at this wonder, and she smiles to herself, though she pretends to be so grave and dignified and unconscious; and John is being questioned about his purchase. Thirty shillings! he has given thirty shillings for it—a whole week's wages!—no wonder that it is a beautiful shawl.

And now they make Rachel rise, and

put it on to see how it looks; and again old John says it is a beauty, and the mothers lift up the corners to show each other how fine it is; and now John spreads it on his own broad shoulders, that Rachel may see, and very gigantic and ungainly he looks in the feminine drapery. But the coy Rachel looks at it now, and she too admires, and Mrs. Drayton says it is the beautifullest shawl that ever was seen.

Up stairs in the attic lies a muslin gown—not white, for Rachel feels herself a very grave person, and thinks white would be too gay for her; so this dress is lilac, like the one she has on, but delicate and thin, as becomes a best gown. Beside it, lies a little close straw-bonnet, with white ribbons—and now has come this shawl,

the crowning grandeur, and they are all to be worn to-morrow.

To-morrow, too, that great pie shall depart and be forgotten, as is the fate of pies. To-morrow, old John shall have his best coat on, with a rose in the breast, like his son's, and shall be supported to church. To-morrow, the young people and Mrs. Drayton shall have a jaunt to Chester, leaving Mrs. Wyld happy at home, taking care of the old man; for to-morrow John and Rachel are to be married.

And now it is finished, the new blue and yellow gown which Mrs. Drayton is to wear to-morrow; and she puts it on, that Rachel may see how it fits, and draws herself up, and goes round the room, that everybody may look at her, as if she were the bride. And now Rachel begins to

sigh and look pale, as the soft evening shadows gather over the sky; and gentle sadness, the refinement of pleasure, steals over them all.

Everything has prospered greatly in the cottage since the widow and her daughter found an asylum there. The garden never has been so productive as this year, and now the apple-trees are bowed down with ripe fruit, ready to be plucked or drop away. It is September, and John has made several voyages since the Wylds came home, and Rachel has laboured busily at her profession, and, thanks to the pleasant air and genial home, has regained her firm elastic health, though the roses blush but very faintly yet upon her cheek; and thrifty Mrs. Drayton has saved a great deal of John's money, and

feels herself in very comfortable circumstances—and now there remains no possible impediment, and everything is ready.

With the new year, the foundry will re-open, and a grand marriage there is to be during the intervening time, in Mr. Power's splendid house: but Mary Power's India shawl is not half so valuable as that white one which Rachel, "with a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye," folds up in her attic, and lays on the little drawers till to-morrow. To-morrow! she says the word with such thoughts as the children had, when they watched her going away to sail over the great sea. Into the infinite, the travellers went, to the eyes of the little ones; and with Rachel the whole future crowds into that to-morrow.

To begin the new grave life, to close one

definite period, the youth with its troubles and its joys; and seriously to enter the maturer time. Grave grows your pale face, Rachel—almost sad—graver than it was when, with some beatings of the heart, you looked for the to-morrow, which should bring you to this home; and they have let you be alone, kindly, to think and pray. Again, there is moonlight, out yonder upon the distant water, but to-night your heart is not at sea. It is within itself, musing, trembling, looking out into the time to come. Kneel down again, Rachel—nothing else remains to do—kneel down in your tremor, and be comforted.

CHAPTER XII.

It is winter, and they are very busy at the foundry of Messrs. Power and Shafton. As you stand and look towards the gate, while the early night falls, crowds of men pour into that muddy lane; for trade is very brisk now, and the men who dispersed themselves in all directions, a few years ago, in search of work, have gathered again by scores into the streets and courts in the

neighbourhood. It is not a very delightful neighbourhood. A little way up, nearer the town, is a canal with coal-yards on its banks, and black coal-barges lazily floating down its sluggish tide. Here, almost close above your head, as you stand looking at the foundry-gate, a railway train, whistling shrilly, passes at a desperate rate, so that you fancy it will lose its feet, and its balance, by-and-bye; and under those ponderous brick arches, which support it, you can see narrow streets, with such multitudes of children playing in them still, by the light of lamps and shop-windows, as might of themselves populate a town. Towards the north jagged half-built streets, leave a broken outline upon brick-fields, and great pieces of waste land, like some irregular coast, marking with bays and promontories the

unfeatured sea; and to the south, all is tumult and mist—a light gleaming here and there—now and then a distinct articulate sound, making itself heard above the universal murmur, as the town stretches far away into the darkness, like a great battle.

Out of the foundry gate pours the full stream of workmen. By the light of that flickering lamp you cannot very well distinguish them, but they have moleskin dresses, considerably blackened, for the most part (for this is Saturday night) and look strong, and healthy, and comfortable, like men who make good wages and are not in the habit of denying themselves. Here and there in the darkness is a glowing spark of red, casting dusky light upon a face of grave enjoyment, and on two careful hands, of

which one holds the pipe firm, while the great thumb of the other presses down the fuming tobacco. By the window of that little shop, which, with its faint light, dimly reveals the figures passing by it, that old man, whose red hair is grizzled as with hoar-frost, and who solemnly taps the lid of his snuff-box before he opens it, and now with grim satisfaction takes a pinch himself, and offers it to his neighbours, is Peter Don, of Aberdeenshire, who made the speech long ago when the rioters threatened to attack the foundry, and who is a special friend and counsellor still, of Mr. Shafton, the "young master." Yonder is another red-haired man, truculent, downlooking, with heavy over-hanging brows; but he drags himself along by the wall like a man disgraced, and few care to be seen in his company. He is sadly

broken down now, the poor authoritative, would-be intellectual sceptic, and sometimes after a long drinking fit, begins to drivel, and cries over himself—over what he was—for now his name is gone, and he has no resource but this miserable one of dissipation, not even the diabolic consolation of making others as bad as himself. In the moulders' workshop, where he labours, he has little voice now, for the new foreman who already is an authority with the men, speaks of Robison with a strange pity which takes from him all his power—the foreman does not condemn him, or speak of him with enmity or pious horror; but with sad compassion, as of a man who has chosen misery for his lot; and the youths do not listen to Robison—for the man who is pitied, ceases to be an oracle, and Robison himself feels

the strange frozen restraint, and somehow cannot speak before the foreman.

Look at this foreman: he is standing at the corner talking to some young men; they have got books in their hands, from Mr. Shafton's new foundry library, books which Mr. Shafton himself does not much care for, except on the score, that David Bruce, who begins to grow like a star now, dimly bright, and far away, selected them; and the foreman is pointing out to the lads, under the lamp where they can see, the best bits, or at least the bits which he thinks best. He is somewhere above thirty, getting mature-like, and a full-grown man, and speaks with a hearty liking to the books which humanizes them, and makes the youths think of them, as of friends. You would fancy there could

not be very much refinement in the speaker, as you look at the rough blue great-coat in which he is arrayed, and the cap which just now he eased off the broad capacious brow, which has still something of boyish fearlessness in its gravity: but listen—there is no vulgarity in the voice; a great power of expression there is in this same human instrument the voice, altogether independent of what it says: sometimes you fall upon a vulgar voice in high places, issuing from lips that would curl in utter scorn, if you mentioned vulgarity; but the foreman's voice is not vulgar.

"What do you mean by bidding us speak like gentlemen? We've got to work hard, there isn't much chance of us ever being gentlemen, unless there's some change," said

one of the lads, as he received back his book.

"I mean—I'll tell you—a gentleman's not just a man who has got nothing to do. A gentleman's like the moulds we make in the shop—they may be to cast the grand bridge for Russia, or they may be to cast a plain piston for an engine, the one mould's just the same as the other; and so I don't care whether it's an earl or an engineer—the mould's made, and if we'll not be like it, its our own fault, and I'll tell you, lads, its our own pride most of all; for we think 'oh we're as good as them,' and stand upon it haughtier than if we had been born what the Chartists call aristocrats. Don't you believe any of that stuff. I'd have you all to be aristocrats and gentlemen, too. Mind,

it's not any gentleman, a master, or a lord, or a great man, that I mean for the mould. It's the grand men in books, and most of all in the Bible; for it's what a man is, and not what he has, that makes him a gentleman; and what I mean is a God-fearing, pure man, thinking as a man should, talking as a man should, minding other people as a man should—a man that has been redeemed."

This last proposition seems too grave for the lads, and they go away considerably subdued; having a little notion that to be redeemed is to be austere and melancholy, though Drayton, the foreman, certainly is neither.

And he goes homeward, up the dark road, and over the canal; that white, gleaming building by the wayside, which

he passes, is Mr. Shafton's new church. A goodly sprinkling of engineers, fairly attacked and captured in their own houses by the young, chivalrous Irish incumbent, will be in the pews to-morrow; and the school-room will overflow with children, and Mr. Shafton will lead in his little Mary—a very little Mary she is to come so far—and beside the other children in that small-statured class, she will get her lesson from papa.

Mr. Shafton is not an intellectual man; less so now, indeed, when David Bruce is gone, than he used to be; he does not say to the young engineers that they should be gentlemen, or speak very much about their elevation as a class; but he asks them to come to church, as if it were a personal favour, and calls upon every one to rejoice

with him when there is a good attendance, and marks out every new-comer with a happy eye for special gratulation.

All those men know how open his hand is—how kindly his heart—and when, now and then, he takes one of the youths, or even one of the fathers, into a corner, and lays his hand on his shoulder, and says half a dozen simple words to him about the grand, holy religion, which is the main-spring of all his own blameless, beneficent deeds, the hearts of the men so exhorted are touched and melted, almost as they would be by the unlooked-for appeal of a child—so loving and simple is Mr. Shafton's faith. And new raids every week makes the joyous young Irish minister, thinking it by no means beneath his dignity to know the names of the children, and to take

counsel with the mothers; and by and bye the fathers go to hear the man who comes to see them, and have a sermon preached to them so very far from dull, that the drowsy eyelids of the mind begin to be rubbed, and waken up; and gradually they learn to get up early on the Sunday mornings, and with that little band of children round them, in those bright, best dresses which there is now some inducement to be careful of, to go all together through the peaceful ringing of the bells, and fill a whole pew in the new church, to the joy of Mr. Shafton's heart.

Close up by the white church, the foreman of the moulders passes on his way home. It is still only five o'clock, though it is quite dark and the lamps are lighted, for the foundry closes early on Saturday night.

He is carrying home his wages, which he thinks are very great wages, and receives always with a silent thanksgiving—fifty shillings—ten of which still, every week, is carried over to the old home cottage, where still the old man dozes on, very sensible of the little comforts which his good son provides for him, and where old Mrs. Drayton still actively puts her cabbage and rhubarb into her great market basket on Saturdays, and thanks Heaven that she always knew he would be a good lad, and a comfort to them all. He has been foreman only a short time, and thinks this ten shillings is a special gift from Providence for "the old folks at home;" for in the foreman's own small bright house, the weekly two pounds is a fortune.

Up, still up, and yonder is the square

tower of Everton Church, and the lights twinkling along its terraced roads among the leafless trees. The way is steep, climbing up, and it is not the street Mrs. Wyld used to live in, but one further north; for the town is striding out every year. This street is just on the model of the other, a row of blue-slated two-storied houses, on this side reaching almost to the top of the hill—on that side stopping half way—so that at the door where John Drayton concludes his journey, there is a full view of the revolving light out on the Rock, of the river and of the sea.

Go in before him, and see what kind of a home it is which awaits the engineer. There is a lamp opposite the window; look at the parlour first, but be careful that you do not stumble over a foot-stool, or over-

turn a chair, lest they hear in the kitchen, and think you a hidden robber, with evil designs upon the books.

For there are books in that recess, though not as many as Joseph Davies has; and by the lamp-light you may read some of the titles, if you have quick eyes. Some proper people shake their heads at John's library, and Mr. Shafton himself looks puzzled, and has slid in a good little Tract Society volume between Wordsworth, and that book which contains the dream of Jean Paul. There it remains, you see, a little doubtful and uncomfortable, one can fancy, in its odd position; but Wordsworth and Jean Paul are very good and quiet in their cloth boards, and lovingly embrace betwen them the little trembling interloper from Paternoster Row.

And the master of the house, the full-grown man, reads now with a strange interest Jean Paul's terrific dream. It is as a grand dim monument for him of the times which are past.

But Joseph Davies does not understand this little collection of books. To him they seem the strangest medley possible, and so they are; but one or two good books of old divinity make Joseph tolerate the rest, though the rest are not books about useful knowledge.

The little room is very neat, has a sofa and mahogany chairs, and a bright carpet; and on holidays and Sabbath-days they sit in it, feeling rather dignified, and Mr. Shafton thinks the sofa very comfortable when he calls; and the young engineers, who come sometimes to borrow a book, or

to tell a grievance to the foreman, receive the pretty parlour into their dreams, and fancy, with its proper ruler, the Mary, or the Lizzie, or the Anne Jane, what a paradise it might be.

And so it is; not a paradise, but a home of high and noble feelings, a charmed place with refinements and courtesies of its own, not less fair to behold, and perhaps more salutary and elevating, than the courtly graces of higher homes.

Now let us close the parlour-door carefully, lest profane dust enter, and in two steps arrive at the kitchen behind. With its bright fireplace, and its red and black floor, this little apartment is just a reproduction of the one in which Mrs. Wyld held the household sceptre long ago; and in the window hangs Rachel's bird—an old

bird now, too feeble for much singing, and on the ledge are some geraniums, slips from Mrs. Drayton's plants at home. By the fireside in a tall American rocking-chair, with a sturdy baby twelve months old on her knee, sits the grandmother in her widow's cap, humming tunes and talking nonsense to him, as he stares into her face with those great wide-open eyes of his, and grasps in his clenched hand the string of her cap. He is by no means peaceably inclined, this baby, for the present quiet, is only a suspension of hostilities, and the grandmother talks nonsense energetically, as Scheherazade told tales, to keep the tyrant's attention occupied, and prevent fatal results, to the head in one case, to the cap in the other.

Opposite on a stool sits a little demure

girl, with brown curls upon her shoulders. She is five years old, and is sewing, and thinks herself a matronly person. Very gravely she shakes her head at obstreperous Johnnie on the grandmother's knee; but, poor little fellow, he is very young, and Jane thinks he will learn to be sensible by and bye, when he is old, like herself. She is hemming frills for his cap just now, and is doing them elaborately, and feels her dignity as eldest to its full extent, only relaxing her industry for an occasional moment, to shake her small grave head at Johnnie, or to hold it up sideways to listen for her father, to whom it is her privilege to open the door.

But little Rachel is not grave. She is three, and does not promise to be like her mother, but has blue eyes, and curls

which are waving in the air continually, and seem to have a distinct life and motion of their own. Poor Jane the eldest is greatly tried with Rachel, who on no account will be still, and behave herself and look like a little woman, but on the contary encourages rebellious open-eyed Johnnie, and pulls without compunction that unhappy cap of the grandmother's; but the grandmother's cap is already an institution to Jane.

And there is Rachel at the little table cutting bread and butter for tea. Her gown is brown merino now, and her hair is smoothed under a pretty cap, and the slight figure she used to have, has filled up a little, and has a matronly look. She too shakes her head at Johnnie, but not so severely as Jane does, and goes on with

quiet self-possession, cutting down the loaf, though he does tug at grandmother's cap; but very greatly shocked and indignant is the elder sister.

The kettle sings on the side of the grate, the teapot reposes before the fire. On the table the cups and saucers shine, the great plate is filled with bread and butter, and now they only wait for the family father—the head of the house.

Listen, there is the father's knock—and Jane lays down her work, and runs to open the door. When they enter the kitchen, the grave child is in advance, her little hand firmly grasping one of those great fingers, and leading the strong man in. "Father's come," says little Jane, looking round like a small senator upon the house-

hold, and "Father's come," echoes little Rachel springing into the strong hands which hold her up in mid air like a toy; and Johnnie crows and mounts up leaning on the grandmother's shoulder, and stretching out his plump arms to be noticed too, and the mother smiles, and says John spoils the children, as she places the teapot on the tray, and sits down in her own presiding place.

And now they have all gathered about the table. Jane on a high chair by her mother's side; Rachel standing by her father's knee, bending down her golden curls in a momentary lull, and with both her little hands buried in one of his; while the grandmother hushes the boy on her knee, and the father lifts his other hand,

and asks a blessing on the daily bread given them of God.

And it is very pleasant, very happy, with its outbursts of childish mirth, its admixture of sweet earnest childish gravity, this evening meal of the working man.

And by and bye, as the night draws on, the little ones kneel down at their mother's knee, and say sweet childish prayers—prayers wherein one feels it is good to be remembered, by name as they remember their friends; and then, so watched and tended, that the mother's guardian presence goes with them into their dreams among the angels, they go to sleep fearlessly, with their little arms folded, as if still for prayer.

And the household is hushed that night with psalms and thanksgivings; and the parents remember their children before God name by name, as the children remembered them; and looking up all of them —up to the heavens, the Father's country — they lie down to such sleep as He gives His beloved, unfearing and in peace.

—Nothing has befallen them yet beyond the common lot. A little higher, and only a very little, is the position the working man has reached; and he is not likely all his life-long to mount another step. All his days he will be a working-man, labouring for daily bread, under that primeval curse which the Lord has made a blessing; but great ambition is in the mind of John. To live

in his little household, the pure ideal Christian life, following after the Divine Man yonder on the highway, which He has made. To live for his race, a manful brave example of how true hearts can vanquish guile—and for his nation to bring up children in honour, purity, faith.

Happy the nation that so has children reared at her knees. Happy—and the future brightens over them. Men who shall possess and conquer adverse fate in the name of God. Women who shall purify this human air with the household words once spoken on the hills of Galilee. Listen not any more to the loud voices round thee—command that it be still, thou mother nation, and in the stillness listen. Voices of little children praying before God

— voices of fathers, mothers, speaking of the Lord; and in these be strong and take courage — for they are thy hope.

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.


A 000 056 799 0